

CHARLES MURRAY'S \$10K PLAN ■ GOP'S IMMIGRATION IMPASSE

JULY 3, 2006

The American Conservative

DIVIDED AND CONQUERED

Israel, Palestine and the Vanishing Two-State Solution



NO HATE HERE

Dear Mr. Buchanan,
I've always enjoyed reading your articles because you are a fair man. Please, in the future, do not use the words "Why They Hate Us" because it is not true that we all hate the American people! Yes, we dislike your administration and what they are doing to keep the truth far away from the American public.

I was taught in the U.S.A. and still hold many pleasant memories from your beautiful country and its fair people. I'm always honored to say that I have plenty of American friends whom I treasure as brothers. They looked after me while I was a guest in your country, and I looked after them.

Please never say that we hate you! We do not respect and tremendously dislike the injustice that your government applies on the Palestinian case.

HISHAM JAAFARI

via e-mail

POINT OF AGREEMENT

I'm shocked that Pat Buchanan and I have finally found something to agree on. As far right as I think he is, I'm as far left. However, he's absolutely correct about the treatment of Palestinians. When I was on the West Bank last fall, the situation was dire for this population that is occupied by the fourth-largest military in the world.

Now that the Palestinians have voted democratically, a step the U.S. urged them to take, they are being punished. Every contact I have on the West Bank blames the U.S. and Israel for their plight and wonders what we really meant when we pushed free elections.

Palestinians are just like the rest of us: they want their children to grow up and have a good life and be happy; they want to live without the threat of aggression, checkpoints, and that terrible wall that Israel has built on Palestinian land. Would any one of us tolerate a country

occupying us, taking away our freedoms, and starving us into submission?

GRETA BERLIN

Los Angeles, Calif.

WHAT ABOUT OUR WALL?

I agree that the Israelis and we have a moral obligation to allow food, medicine, and other supplies to the Palestinian population. However, calling the West Bank Wall "apartheid" or the idea of separation "racist" is hypocrisy.

How would the U.S. react if Mexico elected a government sworn to its destruction? You say their policies that motivate Mexicans to flee across the border destroy the U.S. as we know it. Your answer is to build a wall. However, you say the Israelis can't build a wall. You say the policy of separation is racist. Yet you say the U.S. is primarily a European-derived nation, which Mexicans are changing, although these immigrants share our desire for freedom, wealth accumulation through the free-enterprise system, and freedom of worship.

The Hamas plan is to use demographics as a weapon against Israel and the Jews. They do not share Israel's values, distrust freedom and capitalism, and do not wish to live in peaceful co-existence. Their ideology, while less strident than al-Qaeda and Iranian extremists, is still Islamo-supremacist in nature. What would you say if Mexicans coming across our border were fueled by an ideology to force the white man back to Europe? I think I know.

There must be a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine. The Czech and Slovak republics did it; Ukraine and Russia did it; Norway and Sweden did it; why not Israel and Palestine? To do so, both parties must accept the right of the other to exist peacefully and without the threat of warfare, be it demographic, terrorist, or open.

KALMEN SHILOH

Santa Barbara, Calif.

WHO OWNS SMALL-TOWN AMERICA?

Much praise to John Zmirak for his article on balancing liberty and order and for bringing further attention to the works of Wilhelm Röpke. I agree that localism—and implicitly a strong, united community—is one of the best ways to curb abuses of power, and I try my hardest to live up to it in my voting, shopping, and personal interactions.

A call for localism is insubstantial without an idea of how to sustain it, however. Thus, I wonder whether there might be extra discussion necessary concerning property rights. What good is localism if the rights to capital, primarily physical, can be transferred at will to someone who is not a citizen of the geographical community? Mr. Zmirak's article mentioned how much easier it is to keep account of community leaders than of national leaders. Can the same not be said of property owners? How do you hold accountable a non-citizen property owner?

What are the conditions of property under which local governance might best be sustained? This is a question that greatly concerns me when I read libertarian, anarchist, or conservative thought. Discussing the roles property rights play in both the protection and undermining of localism is a key component in the fight against global corporatism. Luckily, *TAC* is turning out to be a great place to find such discussions.

BRIAN ZUELKE

Laramie, Wyoming

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[WAR]

WHERE THE BUCK STOPS

The last weeks have seen a flurry of reports of war crimes by American troops in Iraq. It now seems likely that last November U.S. Marines, in the aftermath of an IED attack on a convoy, went on a rampage in the town of Haditha, killing two dozen Iraqi civilians. Reports of other U.S. atrocities are now widespread in Iraq, though a military investigation recently found the killing of several Iraqi civilians in the town of Ishaqi fell within the rules of engagement. But many Iraqis, including the new prime minister, believe unjustified American killings of Iraqi civilians are widespread.

The Marines will investigate thoroughly the Haditha killings, and those immediately culpable will be tried. The U.S. military is aware of how detrimental these incidents are not only to the success of its mission, but to its own honor and that of the U.S. in general.

But Americans ought not rest easy with the conclusion that the Haditha killings were the work of a few “bad apples” or “overstressed troops” forced to serve too many tours. American troops have been placed in an environment in which atrocities against civilians—mostly carried out by warring Iraqi factions—are commonplace. In Iraq, Americans now have few friends or natural allies. They are part of an army of occupation, one that invaded Iraq under false pretenses. For years, the majority of Iraqis have wanted them gone.

An army of occupation, a savage guerrilla insurgency, an “unseen enemy”—as it was in Vietnam’s My Lai, this is a recipe for war crimes. The problem of Haditha won’t be solved by the two-hour ethics refresher the military is now initiating nor will justice be served by the prosecution of a few low-level Marines placed in an impossible situation.

Responsibility for Haditha goes higher. It includes those who planned



and plotted to push the United States to invade and occupy a country that posed no threat to America whatsoever and those who sold the American people the lie that the operation would be a “cake-walk” and our soldiers “welcomed with flowers.”

While we have no expectation that those ultimately accountable for Haditha will ever be brought to justice, we ought to have no illusions that those who will be charged are solely responsible for this crime.

[CLOSURE]

ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI (1966-2006)

Can we declare victory and come home now?

[BELTWAY]

UNDERVALUATED VOTERS

It must be the beginning of campaign season when Republicans pay lip service to the religious conservatives they need to turn out on election day. That’s the only explanation for the Senate’s decision to hold a vote on a constitutional amendment preventing same-sex marriage even though it was sure to fail.

Think back to 2004, when values voters beat back heavy Democratic turnout to re-elect President Bush and increase GOP congressional majorities. Same-sex marriage is one of the main issues that brought social conservatives

to the polls. State referenda prohibiting gay nuptials passed in 11 out of 11 states, aiding many Republican candidates’ vote totals.

What does the Religious Right have to show for its electoral contribution? On gay marriage, not much. Senate Republicans opportunistically scheduled this vote less than five months before the 2006 elections, and President Bush waited until two days before the vote to give a speech in favor of this ineffectual gesture, much as the GOP once tried to placate pro-lifers with a futile anti-abortion amendment. A resurrected flag-burning amendment is reportedly not far behind. Social conservatives don’t dominate the Republican Party—it is more accurate to say they are used by it.

[DIPLOMACY]

BUSH GETS REALIST

“Better to jaw-jaw than to war-war” was Winston Churchill’s not very euphoric remark about the preferability of negotiations to battle. America’s neo-conservatives have tried to appropriate Churchill as their patron saint, but the prime minister was a broader and more interesting figure—and not one who always considered war the best solution. The neocons are unhappy that President Bush has authorized Condoleezza Rice to open talks with Iran, despite Rice’s precondition that Iran abandon in advance the nuclear pro-

gram that is the main reason for talks. Already AEI's Michael Rubin is complaining of "irreversible" damage and the "wholesale abandonment" of the Bush doctrine.

We should be so lucky. It is too soon for much optimism, too early to conclude that Bush is distancing himself from Cheney and his neocon minders, many of whom have lusted for an attack on Tehran from the moment Saddam Hussein's statue was pulled down. The neoconservatives are still well entrenched in the Bush administration, and a war against Iran still seems more likely than not.

But talks with Tehran, or even talks about talks, may generate their own momentum. Americans should remain mindful that after 9/11 Iran immediately gave the United States significant help against al-Qaeda and tens of thousands of Iranians openly mourned the American deaths in Tehran vigils. To follow the line that this country is—because of its apparent quest to become the second nation in the Middle East with a nuclear arsenal—an irredeemable enemy of the U.S. is simply madness. We will keep our fingers crossed that Secretary Rice's gambit represents a shift in presidential thinking—a step off the track to another disastrous war.

[POLITICS]

GOP'S BEST SHOT

Immigration trumps corruption—that may be the lesson of the special congressional election to replace jailed Republican Duke Cunningham in California. In few districts across the country were the GOP majority's ethical lapses as big an issue. Democrat Francine Busby's campaign against the "culture of corruption in Washington" was almost enough to send her to Congress, if victorious Republican Brian Bilbray hadn't countered with a big push for immigration enforcement.

Bilbray's campaign slogan was "Proven Tough on Illegal Immigration," and he proved tough even when leaders of his own party wanted him to go soft. Sen. John McCain canceled a fundraiser for Bilbray because of the candidate's strong denunciations of the Senate immigration bill. Busby supported McCain's approach, while Bilbray rightly called it amnesty. Busby's next immigration misstep came when she was recorded telling an apparently illegal questioner that, "You don't need papers for voting, you don't need to be a registered voter to help." The first half of that sentence may have cost her the election.

Given the choice, voters concerned about illegal immigration picked enforcement over amnesty. House members negotiating an immigration bill with the Senate should take notice. So should GOP candidates seeking to escape their party's shadow this fall.

[EDUCATION]

NOT NITPICKING

The No Child Left Behind Act sets out to do exactly what it says—leave no child behind, not even those ridden with lice. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that children with head lice and nits are no longer being sent home in many districts because such absenteeism could jeopardize schools' rankings under NCLB. "Attendance is a benchmark you get graded on," one school board president told the paper. "Schools have failed because one kid missed one additional day." So some have even stopped notifying parents of outbreaks—leaving mom and dad to discover what little Johnny brought home from school.

Justifying themselves, administrators insist that lice are not really harmful. As one Pennsylvania school administrator told the *Journal*, "Head lice are a nuisance, not a hazard." True. No Child Left Behind, on the other hand, is both. ■

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Time for an “Agonizing Reappraisal”

Gazing across what Zbigniew Brzezinski once called the “arc of crisis,” U.S. foreign policy appears to be disintegrating.

On the Horn of Africa, Islamic warriors have seized Mogadishu. The warlords, our allies, are on the run. In Islamist Sudan, the Darfur horror rages on. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, whom our secretary of state was only recently snubbing for undemocratic behavior, now appears again to be *persona grata* as our only alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood. Yet the Egyptian president scarcely seems chastened. His judges just confirmed a five-year jail sentence for his democratic opponent Ayman Nur, and his regime just ordered the International Republican Institute of John McCain to cease operations in Egypt.

While Ehud Olmert promises to work with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Israel moves inexorably to wall off the desired slices of the West Bank, annex Jerusalem and its suburbs, retain military control of the Jordan Valley, and get an America awash in debt to pick up the tab for a reported \$10 billion.

Further east, the U.S. position appears to be crumbling. Despite installation of a new government, the Iraqi insurgency shows no signs of abating, and a religious civil war has begun. From January through May, 6,000 corpses, most showing gunshot wounds and others signs of torture, turned up in Baghdad’s morgue. May was the worst month, with 35-50 bodies coming in every day.

In Basra, once considered pacified, murderous violence among Shi’ite militias has forced Baghdad to declare a state of siege.

Whatever happened at Haditha, Baghdad is demanding apologies for U.S.

atrocities and charging that American troops are callously cold to the collateral killing of Iraqi civilians.

We are building Crusader castles inside the country, but we seem to be losing support among both Americans and Iraqis. Democrats like John Edwards and John Kerry have moved into the anti-war base of their party where Russ Feingold and Al Gore already reside. Can Hillary be far behind?

In Afghanistan, the resurgent Taliban roam half a dozen of the southeast provinces. A traffic accident in which a U.S. military vehicle injured several Afghans and killed one resulted in a shoot-out, anti-American riots, and a Karzai condemnation of U.S. brutality. NATO is moving troops into the Taliban-infested region, but the insurgency is stronger than it has been since Americans arrived, and the opium trade the Taliban once virtually abolished is flourishing.

Under pressure from the EU-3 and Republican Party wise men, Bush has begun to engage Iran. And as Iran and we have common vital interests—both would suffer from all-out war, neither wants to see a breakup of Iraq or return of the Taliban—the makings of a deal are present.

But U.S. intervention in elections in Ukraine, Georgia, and Belarus and our in-your-face bellicosity toward Putin’s Russia are producing the predicted blowback. The decade-old Shanghai Cooperation Organization, consisting of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, is evolving into an alliance to expel the United States from

Central Asia. The SCO appears about to offer membership to India, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Iran.

Iran’s Ahmadinejad is to attend the June 15 meeting in Shanghai. Already, the SCO has effected the expulsion of the U.S. military from Uzbekistan; and Kyrgyzstan has demanded, as the price for retention of U.S. bases, a 10,000 percent increase in rental fees.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, it is impossible today to see a day when America and her allies can eradicate the insurgency or effect a U.S. withdrawal without inviting strategic collapse. We seem to be on a treadmill. And Americans—concerned over the immigrant invasion from Mexico, soaring gas prices, falling stock prices, and deficits ad infinitum—are demanding a timetable to get us off.

Today, the Bush doctrine—the world’s worst regimes will not be allowed to acquire the world’s worst weapons—has been defied by North Korea. U.S. military interventions to create democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan are draining us of blood and treasure. Both, as of now, appear open-ended with no assurance of ultimate victory.

Bush’s democracy crusade has been exploited by Islamists in Egypt, Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. The National Endowment for Democracy may claim victories in Georgia and Ukraine, but the cost of its meddling appears to be the loss of Russia and creation of an anti-American bloc from the Baltic Sea to the Taiwan Strait.

But while the Bush foreign policy appears to be failing at every turn, in neither party can one see another vision. Emerson’s words come to mind: “Things are in the saddle and ride mankind.”

In Dulles’s phrase, it’s time for an “agonizing reappraisal.” ■

[tear down this wall]

Divided & Conquered

A visit to Syria, Israel, and Palestine reveals the barriers—physical as well as political—to Mideast peace.

By Scott McConnell

OFFICIALLY, WE WERE a delegation from Churches for Middle East Peace, a noble but desperately underfunded Washington group created to represent mainstream Christian churches on a vital issue. In more banal terms, we were 12 Americans following a tight schedule through Syria, Jordan, Israel, and “Palestine”—forever getting on and off a bus, shepherded from one meeting to another, following a daily rhythm not unlike children on a long elementary-school fieldtrip.

The meetings devolved into a familiar pattern: CMEP’s director Corinne Whitlatch described the group and its point of view—boiled down to support for a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine and a status for Jerusalem that reflects the city’s importance to two peoples and the three Abrahamic faiths—our hosts made a presentation, we went through some questions, exchanged gifts, posed for a photograph. And then back on the bus, to the next place. Eventually one began to speculate how CMEP might appear to our hosts: why, they must have wondered, do America’s most established churches have so little influence on America’s actual policies? But they were never so tactless as to pose this question directly (though virtually every Arab intellectual we encountered brought up without prompting Stephen

Walt and John Mearsheimer’s now famous essay).

Our first stop was Damascus, the capital that has nearly achieved full “axis of evil” status in George W. Bush’s Washington. Syria is under sanctions legislation rushed through Congress in 2003, the American ambassador has been withdrawn for “consultation,” and the *charge d’affaires* tells us that American policy is to “freeze” the country. An official Syria resistant to being frozen is delighted to welcome a group like ours and to demonstrate to its citizenry its ability to do so.

So on our first morning we had an audience with President Bashar al-Assad, a motorcade to whisk us up the mountain to a white marble presidential palace, our photograph on the front page of the next day’s paper, our comings and goings chronicled on the TV news. Tall and gangly, educated in London as an ophthalmologist, Assad is articulate and well-informed. He is unassuming for a head of state (much less a dictator), a man who might pass for a wonkish professor of biology or computer science at an American university. Assad essentially inherited his post from his late father, Hafez al-Assad—posters of the two together are ubiquitous in Damascus—who had come to power in a 1970 coup. He is an Alawite, a minor-

ity Sh’ite sect, and his regime is vulnerable to ethnic pressures as well as political ones. Christians, who make up 10 percent of Syria’s population and a much higher share of its professional classes, are in a similar minority position and are probably more at home in cosmopolitan Damascus than anywhere else in the Middle East.

Assad is worried about Islamic fundamentalism; he acknowledges that Islamists would do well if elections were held. Before democracy, he says, Syria needs an “upgrade”—more education, literacy, Internet expansion—and then Islamic extremists would have less of an audience. No doubt this is a self-serving argument but not necessarily an incorrect one. There are genuine liberals in Syria’s opposition, but the chances that they would emerge from the chaos if Assad were toppled are unlikely.

Half a million Palestinians dwell in slum-like refugee camps around Damascus, and they are a political wild card, a potentially volatile element in Syria’s politics. Assad says they could return to a Palestinian state on the West Bank; he postures not at all about their possible return to ancestral homes in Haifa. Official Syria is altogether realistic about Israel’s existence and eager to reap the practical benefits of a peace settlement.

Damascus is not wealthy but seems quite sane. We saw no troops in the city, virtually no beggars, and the streets felt safe. The traffic flow reminded my (veteran world traveler) wife of China in the 1970s, jammed with motorbikes and little trucks. Black-and-white TVs were visible in businesses open late but not selling very much. In the Christian neighborhood where we stayed, the sidewalks were full of young men and women milling about in same-sex groups, eyeing one another but seldom mingling.

and touching their hearts as we passed. But, they avidly informed us, they are professors of comparative literature, doctors of medicine and pharmacy, and were eager to talk, especially to the women in our female-led delegation. Alas, we had only an hour, and once we got through the choir, the introductions, the now familiar presentation about Syria being a country of many faiths and how the Jewish and Christian prophets are honored in Islam, it was time to go. The women seemed visibly disap-

pre-Easter break convocation at Convent of the Sacred Heart in New York or any large parochial school in the Western world. I told the diplomat that there are many in the corridors of power in Bush's Washington who want nothing more than to smash the Syrian regime in the service of the "global democratic revolution" or whatever is the slogan of the moment at the American Enterprise Institute, and this smashing would have incalculably tragic consequences for the community whose celebration we had witnessed the night before. He nodded with a look of weary resignation.

We spent a day traveling through Jordan, stopping at the ancient Roman city of Jerash. Ruins don't move me, but none of us could ignore the shock of re-entering the "global marketplace." As soon as we stepped off the bus, we were accosted by ragged bands of little boys shouting "Mister, Mister" and trying to sell us postcards and umbrellas, followed immediately by grown men trying to do the same thing. In Damascus, one might receive a smile and polite expression of interest about where one came from, or occasionally, in the souk, an invitation to "please come in and take a look at my pottery." But Syria's isolation means the reflex of falling over oneself to accommodate the West's purchasing power has not taken hold.

It's a cliché, the short distances between Israel and its neighbors. Beirut and Damascus are only several hours' drive away. Once we cleared Israel's Allenby Bridge checkpoint—a six-hour ordeal—we were no more than an hour on mountain roads from Jerusalem, which along with its close suburbs of Bethlehem and Ramallah would fit comfortably into New York City's geographic limits.

Modern nationalism has inflicted a wound on a region once culturally diverse but geographically united, and it is not surprising to hear Christian clerics

WATCHING THE YOUNG **CHOIR BOYS FUSSING WITH THEIR UNIFORMS** OR MOTHERS GATHERING THE KIDS TOGETHER AFTER THE EVENT, **ONE COULD IMAGINE THIS AS A CONVOCATION AT CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART IN NEW YORK.**

The head scarf is making inroads—about half the women in the city now wear it, and as there are no religious police enforcing dress codes, it is a style freely chosen. While this surely reflects the growth of fundamentalist Islam, in Damascus at least it seems more a fashion statement and certainly not an effort to put a lid on female sensuality. Many "covered" Damascene women wear tightly fitted outfits and provocative eye makeup.

As CMEP is in part a religious group, several of our meetings were with archbishops of the Christian churches and prominent Muslim clerics. The interest of our Syrian hosts in putting on a real reception for a group that is hardly a powerhouse in American politics was remarkable. Sheik Kuftaro's Islamic Foundation, for instance, a huge institution with some 8,000 students, assembled, at 10 in the morning, a middle-school girls' choir and a group of about 20 clerics and professors to "dialogue" with us. Eight were women, tightly wrapped, unable to shake hands with the men in the reception line, smiling

pointed, anxious perhaps to dispel for their American guests preconceptions about women in Islam being powerless ciphers (or perhaps to illuminate them). But as always, the bus awaited.

We spent part of an afternoon at the American ambassador's residence, hearing our diplomats explain how they are keeping economic and political pressure on the Assad regime and about Syria's lack of progress towards real reform. Off the record, around a table of drinks and snacks, the tone softened. They all loved being stationed in Damascus and were delighted with their encounters with unofficial Syria. I told one diplomat that the evening before we had attended a concert at the city's largest Greek Orthodox church, hearing men's, women's, and children's choirs perform religious and folk songs. It was a large and formal event, a milestone in the Damascene Christian calendar. Watching the young choir boys fussing shyly with their uniforms or their mothers coddling younger brothers and sisters or gathering the kids together after the event, one could easily imagine this as a

make wistful reference to “the Roman period” or “even the Ottoman” as better than the present. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine any Mideast solution that does not follow the logic of the nation-state, or as CMEP puts it, “two viable states, Israel and Palestine ... side by side, with secure and recognized borders.”

It is late afternoon by the time we arrive, pulling into the Lutheran World Federation on the Mount of Olives. The day is cool, the sun is bright, the hills are shimmering, the Dome of the Rock glistens below us. It is a scene of extraordinary beauty. But the human and political situation, as we would hear from virtually everyone we spoke to over the next week, is ugly and deteriorating rapidly. Two months prior to our arrival, Hamas had won the Palestinian election, and no Palestinian who met with us—none of whom were Hamas voters—failed to express pride in the vigorous and fair electoral process. “A successful delivery, but a sick baby” remarked an aide to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Sick and near death, too, is the peace process that had infused the region with hope in the early 1990s.

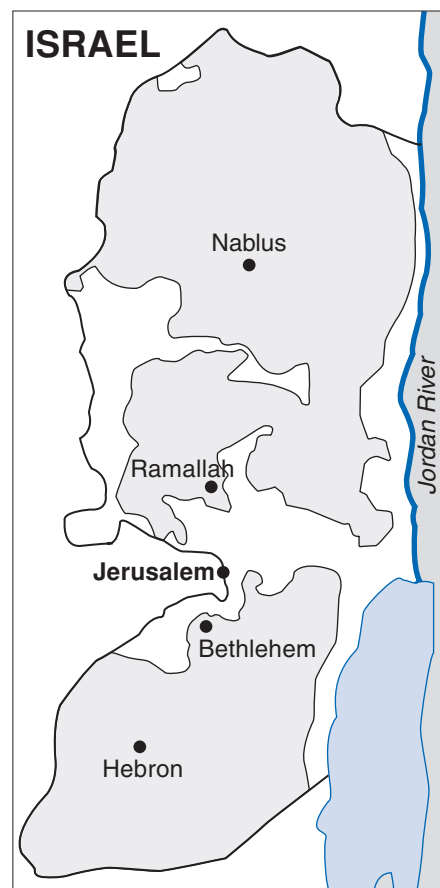
In retrospect, it may be that these hopes, which glowed so brightly among the Israeli Left and center and among virtually all Palestinians, were based on a misunderstanding: the Palestinians believed that in return for their recognition of Israel and renunciation of their claim to historic Palestine, they would achieve a viable and fully sovereign state on the West Bank and Gaza, the territories seized by Israel in the 1967 War; the Israelis believed they could give up nothing they really wanted for themselves and be rid of their Palestinian problem once and for all.

The geography in and around Jerusalem brings into sharp relief the difference between the two geographic visions. With many other Americans, I had my moments of impatience with the seemingly endless talks in the late 1990s, when “final status” was at least nominally under discussion. The Israelis, one read repeatedly after the Camp David talks had broken down, were prepared to give Arafat 97 percent of the West Bank, or perhaps merely 94 percent. It seemed nearly the whole loaf, plus territorial compensation for the remainder, taken from “Israel proper.” While the actual acreage offered to the Palestinians varied from account to account, it led to the same conclusion: why did the Palestinians need to haggle over a few

hectares of land, a nominal percentage of the West Bank, when the prospect of a real independent state was within their grasp? I was, of course, aware of Israel’s construction of a separation wall that stretched beyond Israel’s internationally recognized borders and tried to read with necessary care the articles in the *New York Review of Books*, with their detailed maps and their many footnotes from Peace Now’s Settlement Watch and B’Tselem, with their myriad references to new Israeli settlements whose names I couldn’t pronounce. But this seemed more than one really needed to know if one was committed, as a matter of justice (and, not incidentally, of convenience to America) to a “two-state solution.”



Israel's Internationally Recognized 1967 Borders



Israel's 2000 Proposal for Final Status

SOURCE: FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE WWW.FMEP.ORG

But this casual attitude toward a few percentage points of West Bank acreage here and there cannot survive a visit to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Ramallah. When we arrived, Israeli voters had just given Ehud Olmert's centrist Kadima party a narrow victory, while Hamas was trying to put together a cabinet. As several Palestinian intellectuals and American church officials mentioned to us, Hamas was the perfect foil for the

Jerusalem, including those sections that are historically Palestinian, and it thrusts eastward in various peninsulas and salients into the West Bank in order to gather in various newly constructed Israeli West Bank settlements. Routing the wall so that the settlements fall on the Israeli side, ensuring they have space for further expansion and access to all the water resources they might need, and satisfying the supposed

economic and cultural hub of the West Bank—as connected to the Palestinian towns of Ramallah and Bethlehem as McLean, Virginia and Bethesda, Maryland are to Washington, D.C. But the wall effectively severs Jerusalem to Palestinians from Bethlehem and Ramallah. If a man from Bethlehem were marry an Arab Jerusalemite, the couple would face years of bureaucratic wrangling to get a Jerusalem residency permit, and until that time they could not live together.

The wall cuts off Palestinian farmers from their land and workers from their jobs, separates families, and prevents access to hospitals where they traditionally have gone for medical treatment and places where their children can pursue higher education. In *Ha'aretz*, the liberal Israeli paper that prints news that seldom appears in the American mass media, columnist Amira Hass writes, "Palestinians living under the Israeli occupation are imprisoned in a thicket of physical, corporeal barriers of all types and sizes (checkpoints, roadblocks, blockades, fences, walls, steel gates, roads prohibited to traffic, dirt embankments, concrete cubes) and by a frequently updated assortment of bans and limitations." The wall and checkpoints mean that Bethlehem University, the Catholic school founded 30 years ago with Vatican support, has increasing difficulty educating its students because travel to and from the school has become so arduous.

Among Palestinian activists and intellectuals, one often hears the word "bantustan" to describe the various cantons the West Bank has been divided into, cities where the Palestinians may practice "self-rule" while needing Israeli acquiescence for any movement of people and goods. It is clearly a polemical word, linking Israel to South African apartheid, and surely another term is needed. But it is clear that the boundaries Israel

CUT OFF FROM ITS AGRICULTURAL HINTERLAND, LACKING ROOM FOR EXPANSION OR EVEN PARKS, BETHLEHEM, IN OLMERT'S VISION, IS TO BE SURROUNDED BY CONCRETE, A WALLED-IN URBAN GHETTO.

Israeli Right. Because of the group's terrorist past and its caginess about recognizing Israel, the Olmert government has a credible excuse not to negotiate with the Palestinians and is under no American pressure to do so. As it happens, throughout the previous year Israel had also refused to negotiate with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for reasons that were less apparent, as Abbas clearly recognized Israel and sought a peaceful path to Palestinian statehood.

The essence of Olmert's convergence policy, a path initiated by Ariel Sharon, is for Israel to determine unilaterally its borders by withdrawing from isolated settlements in Gaza and some in the West Bank and building a wall—in places a 30-foot high concrete structure—on the boundaries of its choosing to separate itself from the Palestinians. Halfway constructed, the wall has clearly been something of an impediment to suicide bombers, and no one could plausibly object if Israel decided to build a wall along the 1967 boundary line—Israel's internationally recognized border. But the wall's route expands Israel's territory considerably in key areas. It takes in the entire city of

requirement that the wall be constructed on "high ground" requires Israel to annex far more land than is taken by the settlements themselves.

The impact of the wall's construction on the major Palestinian towns of the West Bank is dramatic. For example, Bethlehem is now flanked on two sides by the wall and on the rest by a highway built for exclusive use by Israeli settlers. Cut off from its agricultural hinterland, lacking room for expansion or even parks, Bethlehem, in Olmert's vision, is to be surrounded by concrete, a walled-in urban ghetto.

To the east of Jerusalem, visible from the Mount of Olives, is the new settlement of Ma'ale Adumin, connected to Jerusalem through its own hinterland, called "E-1." This complex of vacant land and new suburb stretches eastward into the West Bank as far as the eye can see, dividing the future Palestinian state, in effect, in half. Meanwhile, in the interior of the so-called Palestinian area, Israeli military checkpoints are everywhere, fixed and floating. Even if one were to put aside the religious significance of Jerusalem for Muslims, the eastern parts of the city are the eco-

is now drawing for itself do not leave room for a viable Palestinian state. Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi of PASSIA, a Jerusalem-based think tank, says that Palestinians have taken up the term “Palestan” for their areas—the zone around the northern town of Nablus, one around Hebron, one around Ramallah, the Gaza Strip—four circles, surrounded by the Israeli security zone along the Jordan River, separated by the Ma’ale Adumin/E-1 complex and network of Israeli-controlled roads and checkpoints.

The Palestinian economy was in a freefall even before the election of Hamas and the cutoff of Western economic aid. The out-migration of the Christian middle class is accelerating: students we spoke to at Bethlehem University talked of having no job prospects in Palestine. One young man exclaimed with mock defiance, “We will never leave our homeland!” and then smiled, explaining that is just “an emotional slogan.” If he wants to work, he will have to leave.

The Israelis welcome such a result. If educated people are denied the possibility to travel, to pursue a profession, to raise a family in normal circumstances, they will seek other options. The policy that envelops the Palestinians in a maze of restrictions can’t quite be called ethnic cleansing—it is milder, and always carried out under the sheen of legality. But the result is the same.

This anyway was the dire impression our group received during a week of meetings in Bethlehem and Jerusalem with Palestinian intellectuals and activists, Israeli human-rights organizations, the archbishops and officials of the main Christian churches, and international relief workers. Except for an Israeli brigadier general who was an eloquent advocate of his government’s point of view and the American consul general, who was a caricature of smug-

ness and nonchalance about the looming humanitarian collapse of the West Bank, everyone we spoke with was somber. “I wish I had better news for you” was a phrase we must have heard a dozen times. The core of the lament was that Israeli actions over the past ten years are effectively foreclosing the possibility of a two-state solution, and Palestinian society is approaching a state of collapse, with the intensification of every social ill—and all this before the American-organized cutoff of funds to the Palestinian Authority had its predictably disastrous impact.

It is a sociological truism noted by Tocqueville that there is no more dangerous period for a social system than when a time of gradual improvement suddenly ends: “Evils that have been patiently endured when they seem inevitable become intolerable once the idea of escape from them is suggested.” The Israeli occupation that Palestinians

California-born Montell is young, dynamic, still seems American—and leads one to wonder how it happens that a liberal Jewish woman who made *aliyah* has a better sense of the strategic realities of the war on terror than 99 percent of those in the U.S. Congress. B’Tselem may be the foremost purveyor of research and documentation of the impact of Israeli policies on the Palestinian Arabs. Its point of view, of course, is not widely shared in Israel. Indeed, Montell explains, the dominant attitude is that the Palestinian problem is over as far as Israel is concerned. “They voted for Hamas” and Israel has “no partner” are the phrases one hears repeatedly.

So what are the options, beyond despair and waiting for the situation to deteriorate further? Mitri Raheb is a Palestinian Lutheran who has created the International Center of Bethlehem. He is a theologian, slight, balding, intense—an intellectual who can find

THE POLICY THAT ENVELOPS THE PALESTINIANS IN A MAZE OF RESTRICTIONS CAN’T QUITE BE CALLED ETHNIC CLEANSING—IT IS MILDER, AND ALWAYS CARRIED OUT UNDER THE SHEEN OF LEGALITY. BUT THE RESULT IS THE SAME.

endured through the 1970s and 1980s seemed, after Oslo, on its way out. And then, with the withering of the peace process, the idea of escape was suddenly foreclosed. The second intifada, inevitably crushed by Israel, followed, leaving nothing in its wake except deepening despair. As the Anglican Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal put it, “When you don’t have money to buy bread, death becomes more worthy.”

And so one can imagine that Palestine might yet become what it has never been, a recruiting ground for al-Qaeda, or, as B’Tselem’s executive director, Jessica Montell, puts it, “a swamp for breeding terrorists around the world.” The

new things to say about a situation that generates millions of words of commentary every week. His center, built with funds raised in Europe, is a testament to his vision: it is time for Palestinians to “stop whining” and begin to build their own institutions. It is hard, he acknowledges, to build a state under occupation—no society has ever been asked to do it before—but the Palestinians have no other choice. His center has an exhibition hall for student artwork, job-training programs for unskilled workers, conference centers, college-level classes—an effort to raise Palestinian political and social consciousness. “Our role as Christians is to give a foretaste of what

Palestine will look like ... to build facts on the ground that are as real as the wall." Go back to your churches, he exhorts us, and have them help us build a state. Israel, too, could never have been built without American help. His talk takes some surprising detours into self-criticism: Palestinian Christians put their eggs in the basket of Arab nationalism, which has proved a failure in a time when all the pre-20th-century identities are asserting themselves. He quotes Tony Blair, who recently described his vision of "two states side by side, one Muslim, one Jewish"—perhaps Blair just made a slip of the tongue, he says wryly.

Raheb remains, just barely, an advocate of the two-state solution, but his mild demeanor softens what is an edgier analysis. "The state called Palestine has failed," he says, but "whenever Jewish leaders come, we tell them the whole project of Israel has also failed. The ghettoizing of Palestinians cannot be the fulfillment of the Jewish dream. ... If you read the Bible seriously, a project called Israel never succeeded. Its leaders sinned against God. A national state can never be the answer to people's aspirations. ... It is a time for repentance. Israel has been calling for churches to do repentance for years. Now it is time for Israel to do repentance. I know this is tough to say in the U.S., but most church people are cowardly and won't speak the truth."

Our group had some difficulty digesting this. "Uh, Mitri, are you suggesting that CMEP give up its advocacy of the two-state solution?" one of us asked. He replied, in the end, no, not yet, there is perhaps a tiny little window for a two-state solution still open. But he warned what was ahead: Israel would use its great marketing power to sell its unilaterally drawn boundaries as "a two-state solution," with boundaries giving Israel Ma'ale Adumin and the Palestinians the holes within the Swiss cheese, with tunnels

connecting the various Palestinian areas so they can move between them underground like rats.

Other prominent Palestinians are also contemplating the end of two-state diplomacy. On our last day, we drove in our bus out to Ramallah, over rutted and dusty roads, so the 10-mile trip took nearly an hour, arriving finally at the Presidential Palace where Mahmoud Abbas exercises what power he has over the Palestinian Authority. This was mid-April, and the European and American financial freeze on the new Hamas government was just getting underway. We met there with several members of the PA's Negotiations Support Unit set up to give legal and strategic advice to Palestinians engaged in negotiation with the Israelis—except there are no negotiations to support, nor the prospect of any. So we sat in a room with able, Western-educated, secular Palestinian

to explore ways in which it can come to terms with the reality of Israel.

Kassissieh tells us the Palestinian Authority has begun discussing the option of simply dismantling itself: the PA has no intention of managing an Israeli occupation of a non-sovereign and non-viable Palestine. One can see how this choice—something akin to going limp when facing arrest at a civil-rights demonstration—would have an appeal after other avenues have been cut off. Israel as the occupying power would have responsibility for the humanitarian crisis it has created, and the Palestinians could begin to agitate for voting rights in the country that governs them. It is not clear whether this option was being presented as a rhetorical point for our benefit or is a serious alternative. But it clearly has the appeal of a real reset, a way of abruptly reversing the tempo of a losing game.

ISRAEL WILL USE ITS GREAT MARKETING POWER TO SELL ITS UNILATERALLY DRAWN BOUNDARIES AS "A TWO-STATE SOLUTION."

professionals, drinking tea in a newly constructed administrative office building—all with the sense that either humanitarian disaster or civil war is but months away and there is nothing we can do forestall it. Issa Kassissieh says that the West has taken a "kill quickly" decision regarding Hamas in hopes that an aid cutoff will lead to a quick collapse of the newly elected government. He blames the West for Hamas's election, noting that during the year in which Abbas led the Palestinian Authority he was not able to negotiate the removal of a single Israeli checkpoint.

There is a consensus for a two-state solution with Palestine, a consensus that includes most Hamas voters, but Hamas has been given no room to climb down from its historic positions, no time

Midway through our trip, we spent a hurried hour with Victor Batarseh, mayor of Bethlehem, a courtly Catholic of about 70. He was, as almost all Palestinians were, eager to see us, as if he believed that Americans—if we could somehow convey to our countrymen what was going on—could tear down the gates that imprison the Palestinians. And, typically, just as the conversation was getting going, it was time for us to move on to our next appointment. My wife dawdled in the mayor's antechamber as the group filed out, and I waited with her. She approached him and said, "My father worked for the United Nations, in the Office of Peacekeeping, for many, many years. He was here in 1967, and in 1973, and many other times—it was his life. He retired in 1987, and just a couple of years ago, he was dying. He was Chinese,

and had no religion really, but my mother, who is English, thought he ought to have a minister come.

"When the minister came, my father, who was very lucid and knew what was happening, was very polite. He chattered for a while and then turned serious and said to the minister, 'If there is a God and I meet him, I am going to ask him why he has been unjust to the Palestinians.' That night, he died." Margaret started to choke up as she finished, and Mayor Batarseh also began to cry. They embraced each other; he said he was very glad that she had told him the story.

There are many wrongs in the world, most with complicated histories. But the Israeli-Palestinian impasse is a special one for Americans, in part because of Jerusalem, holy to Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and in part because of the role the conflict plays in generating Muslim hostility to America and the West, but mostly because it is a wrong that the United States has done so much to create and perpetuate, a wrong that the United States has the power to set to right—not by bombing anyone but simply through the normal tools of aid and diplomacy.

It is not a question of the creation of the state of Israel, a country born in tragedy and hope and one with numerous extraordinary accomplishments to its credit. It is a question of the continued dispossession of the Palestinians, an unnecessary act and yet one that Americans sustain every day with their tax dollars. Unlike many other injustices, it is one of the easiest in the world to put right: everyone knows the parameters of a just solution, what the shape of a fair settlement would be.

My fear, and it is the fear of everyone who went on the trip and a great many of the people we met with, is that the failure to achieve a just peace will come back to haunt us in terrible ways. ■

Monumental Mistakes

When honoring the dead, less is often more.

By Peter Wood

A COUPLE OF MILES from my house in Vermont, up a deeply rutted forest road, over a stream, through a thicket of blackberry bushes, and up a pathless hillside, stands a marble obelisk. It is the gravestone for two children, sisters—Susan Isabell (age four) and Rosella (age one) Parmenter, who died a couple of days apart of diphtheria in June 1859. The marker was carved by an artisan, but the plot is surrounded by an old iron chain pinioned into four upended pieces of fieldstone.

That grave came to mind as I was reading about the new estimate—\$972 million—for the cost of the World Trade Center Memorial. One reason the cost is so high is the competition between New York City, the Port Authority, families of some of the victims, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and the Memorial Foundation. Picture the scene in "Hamlet" where the prince, seeing Laertes leap into Ophelia's grave, leaps in too and declares he'll match Laertes' extravagant mourning, gesture for gesture:

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:

Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?

Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?

I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I:

And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw

Millions of acres on us, till our ground,

Singeing his pate against the burning zone,

Make Ossa like a wart!

Of course, we need to stage this a little differently. After Hamlet jumps into the grave, he has to be followed by Mayor Bloomberg, the Port Authority, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and the whole cast, down to Osric and the ghost.

I need to be careful here. I recognize that I am touching on one of the deepest felt and most tender of human emotions: vanity. Memorials may do little for the dead. Whether they serve the living and the generations to come depends. We should be thankful that Shah Jahan's obsessive grief for his wife took the form of the Taj Mahal. We have less to be thankful that the Politburo mummified Vladimir Lenin. Hugh Hefner, we are told, plans to have his remains interred in a mausoleum adjacent to that of Marilyn Monroe.

Public memorials best suit those who died heroically in a larger cause. Gettysburg is preserved as a tribute to thousands who fell there. The Lincoln Memorial makes public sense.

But what of those who die in natural catastrophes? Ought we to have great public memorials to the victims of the San Francisco Earthquake, the Johnstown Flood, or the Galveston Tidal Wave? I'm inclined to say that events of

this sort are indeed more than a sum of private griefs and deserve some kind of public acknowledgement. The statue of the storm-beaten sailor in Gloucester, Massachusetts is a fitting memorial to the fishermen lost at sea. To mark untimely deaths, to record with due solemnity the destruction that on a quiet morning devoured a community whole, is to acknowledge our awful weakness in the face of things. The memorials that best speak to this are infused with humility. Gigantic reflecting pools and other colossi of proud remembrance miss the point altogether. They pretend to humility but are really shaking a defiant fist at the universe.

What then of the unnatural catastrophe? The sneak attack? Pearl Harbors and 9/11s? How are we to memorialize those who are ambushed, or who die in panic and confusion? A memorial ought to express a public feeling toward an event, but some events don't summon feelings that are especially worthy of enduring expression. What is the memorial we would raise when we are appalled by wanton killing and the enormity of evil men? A collection of high-backed empty chairs in Oklahoma City commemorates the Alfred P. Murrah Building blown up by Timothy McVeigh. The chair convention might be merely silly if it were in the courtyard of a modern art museum. As a tribute to murdered innocents it is something worse than silly.

The best monuments in such contexts probably can't exist all in one place. The *USS Arizona* Memorial in Pearl Harbor is half a monument, which is completed, in a way, by the Felix de Weldon statue near Washington based on Joe Rosenthal's photo of U.S. Marines raising the flag on Mount Suribachi.

But today we seem unable to resist the temptation to turn anger and grief into empty grandiosity. To suggest that we might well pay due honor to the vic-

tims of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center with, say, a \$10 million monument, is to risk being accused of sheer hardheartedness. And to suggest that we could have a truly fitting permanent tribute at a cost of \$1 million—well, that's beyond parsimonious. It's villainy.

Of course, a profoundly moving monument might take no more than a singed fireman's hat. I doubt all those folks crowding into Ophelia's grave would get it, but compressing the vastness of the World Trade Center into a single luminous detail would be a better memorial.

The crocodile-eating contest in lower Manhattan, incidentally, is small change compared to the efforts to rebuild New Orleans. In this case, the nation seems intent on erecting a whole city to memorialize the notorious one that washed away. Our elected leaders strive to outdo each other with lavishing funds on a project that seems destined in a few decades to be visible mainly from glass-bottomed boats. But erecting memorials is not about cold rationality. It is about heartfelt ... political calculation. Much of the time, anyway.

Promoters of rebuilding New Orleans *in situ*, like promoters of building the giant "Freedom Tower" in New York, often suggest that our national honor requires these gestures. We need to show that we aren't going to let a mere hurricane (combined with poorly built levies, corrupt and incompetent local government, clueless state authorities, and a lame federal response) slow us down. And we need to show al-Qaeda that we still know how to build skyscrapers. These claims on honor seem to me entirely mistaken. It is not honorable to build cities below sea level on hurricane-frequented coastlines. And building a skyscraper as an act of defying bin Laden is mere petulance.

I came across the Parmenter grave in Vermont about 20 years ago while hiking. It was marked on a geological

survey map as "cem." but it turned out to be just that one gravestone. I've made a point of revisiting it each year since, and I'm apparently not alone in finding something touching about this little memorial lost in the second growth forest. Sometimes I find dried flowers at the foot of the stone and now and then someone hacks down the encroaching saplings.

The Revolutionary War veterans who settled in central Vermont in the 1780s recorded both their ideals and their harsh experience in the names they fixed on the landscape. The Parmenter girls are buried on Liberty Hill. Off in the distance, you can see Mount Hunger. The settlers cleared the forest and started farms. For a few generations, the area thrived, but then America started moving west. Vermont's population peaked in 1820, and by the time the Parmenter girls died in 1859, Liberty Hill was on the downward slope. When Susan and Rosella succumbed to fever, their parents built their memorial on the prominent spur of a hill, surrounded by open farmland. Today, there is nothing but forest, crisscrossed with old stone walls and occasional cellar holes where farmhouses once stood.

Visitors to the grave can't help but feel the sweep of indifferent history that leaves so few relics of our lives, but also can't help but feel the heartbreak of those parents who turned away from the town cemetery to build their own. Whatever we end up with at the site of the World Trade Center, I doubt that it will speak with as much clarity and force as those farmers found in their tribute to their lost children. ■

Peter Wood is provost of The King's College and the author of A Bee in the Mouth: Anger in America Now, which will be published by Encounter Books in October.

Unfinished Business

Defeat in Iraq is a humiliation, but failure in Afghanistan produces a real threat.

By Stewart Nusbaumer

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN—When I arrived in Afghanistan a month ago, people were relaxed, optimism was in the air. Now Kabul has a nightly curfew, and military aircraft are in the air.

The nervous buzz is that nonessential U.S. Embassy personnel will be sent home after one more riot or bombing. Aid workers are moving from the countryside to the cities—too dangerous in many rural areas. But there's no safety in the cities either: last week in Kabul, I was surrounded by cracking gunfire and protesters screaming, "kill Americans!" That destroyed my idea of Afghanistan being a cakewalk.

I've seen many wars—Vietnam, Beirut, El Salvador, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, Honduras, Peru, Philippines, Kosovo. In none of these did protesters scream to kill American civilians. In none of these wars did I avoid public taxis for fear of being kidnapped. In none did I carry a gun as a reporter. And never did the situation plunge from public optimism to military curfew in just one month.

Sure, there was talk of a stronger Taliban offensive this spring or summer, but that's said every year. There were complaints about the reconstruction of the country, but reconstruction is always cause for complaint. (Cambodia is a UN political/security success, but it's an economic disaster zone.) There were concerns that Afghanistan was having a bumper poppy harvest—that did catch my attention. But I did not hear that a traffic accident could turn Kabul into a shooting gallery.

Last week, after a U.S. military vehicle slammed into a line of cars and caused one Afghan fatality, an anti-American rampage ripped through Kabul. There was gunfire, lots of gunfire, and dead people. Automobiles were set afire, shops were looted, international aid offices were sacked, and foreigners' guesthouses were torched. For several hours, I was surrounded by nasty gunfire and outraged protestors.

The *Times* of London correspondent wrote, "I've been in Kabul for nine months and there has never been anything like this before. There is a real feeling in the air that today Kabul changed."

"This place is starting to unravel," says Dan, whose employment is a little mysterious. Sitting in his comfortable living room, he makes us another drink. "Did you know they just increased the price of Jack Daniels by 25 percent, Stewart?" When the price of a staple skyrockets, you know the country is in trouble.

I came here to write that Afghanistan is not Iraq, that Afghanistan is looking promising, while Iraq is utterly hopeless. In one month, Afghanistan flipped from looking promising to starting to unravel. So I don't know what to write.

Dan, his friend Mohammad, and I trudge along a wicked dirt road with peaks resembling the Swiss Alps and depths similar to the Mojave Desert—this in the center of Kabul. At the corner, we're mugged by a gang of desperate nomads: a half-dozen hyper kids and two whimpering burkha-covered women

clinging infants with deadpan faces. To give money is considered dangerous, inviting a deadly stampede the next time you venture on the street; not giving money is considered dangerous, inviting a deadening of your humanity. A mammoth United Nations SUV roars past nearly deadening all of us.

Turning the corner, we run into another Afghanistan danger: a high-grade rush of raw sewage. "After almost five years, why still not better?" Mohammad asks as we sip tea at a roadside restaurant, too close to an open sewer for my tastes. "You know what we call Kabul? The Toilet! That's what we call our capital."

The capital Toilet has a load of nasty stats: 80 percent of Afghan adults are illiterate; only one in 20 houses has electricity; 40 percent of Afghans do not have enough to eat; Afghanistan has the second worst child-mortality rate in the world; 50 percent of the workforce have no jobs; average life expectancy is 43 years—Afghans don't plan on much of a middle age.

The sidewalks here are interesting ragged cement chunks at slippery angles interspaced with ankle-breaking canyons. Dan scans a group of men ahead—tall and lean with fiery dark eyes and angry dark beards, wearing dark turbans. He inches his right hand closer to his hip, where his handgun is hidden under a loose-fitting shirt. I slowly move my hand around to the small of my back near my pistol. Mohammad instinctively drops back, fingering the weapon in his pocket.

In the last two weeks, a surge in fighting has produced 400 dead, the heaviest number since the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban government. Some days there are more dead and wounded in Afghanistan than in blood-drenched Iraq. The Taliban owns four provinces in the south, and attacks are spreading throughout the country. Suicide bombings are becoming more common, a horror imported from Iraq. Instead of the ignored other conflict, Afghanistan may soon be the new Iraq War.

European nations are sending thousands of additional troops to Afghanistan, while the U.S., which had planned to reduce its troop level this year, is reconsidering. But can there ever be enough troops?

We walk past several men shoveling globs of black sewage out of an open ditch and onto the back of a truck. Gruesome. An old man without a leg, using crude wooden crutches, approaches with an outstretched hand. A Lexus SUV races by, nearly amputating the old man's outstretched hand.

There is another Kabul. Rising outside the walls of the Le Monde Guesthouse where I live is a four-story residential building, on another side a two-story house, behind the compound a French restaurant just opened up. In several sections of town there is a boom in retail construction, mostly small shops—electronics stores, neighborhood grocery outlets, boutiques, motorcycle dealerships. There are now an enclosed shopping mall and new condos on the outskirts of Kabul.

"Yes, yes," Mohammad says impatiently. "There is much money now, much building, but not for us! Things go up, we still have no money."

Out of the corner of my eye I spot a contingent of street kids racing toward us. Suddenly a fighter jet swoops down and blasts past.

"Everything going up in price," Mohammad is saying. "Foreigners have much money and make prices higher. We can't afford anything."

"The price for food and housing has skyrocketed," Dan says as he pushes the gate buzzer at my guesthouse. "Salaries have remained pretty much the same, so Afghans are being squeezed—unless they work for an international organization."

"Karzai is not our president," Mohammad says. "He's your puppet." Dan adds matter-of-factly, "Without foreign troops Karzai wouldn't last a day—maybe an hour."

A tiny boy pulls on my pant leg, "I have no mother, no father, no brother, you give me dollar?"

The anti-American riot that ripped through Kabul, pinning me behind my guesthouse walls, had roots, it seems to me, in nearly five years of promises unfulfilled—promises that Afghans would have security, reconstruction, and democracy. Instead Afghans have omnipresent poverty, nonexistent public services, rising power of insurgents, declining support for government, privileged foreigners—a volatile mixture that exploded in gunfire on the streets of Kabul. When you have only desperation, promises are taken seriously.

Vanni Cappelli, president of the Afghanistan Foreign Press Association, says the deterioration could have been avoided if the Bush administration had committed enough troops, built up the Afghan security forces while disarming the warlords, and allocated sufficient funds for reconstruction. "The Bush administration was never serious about national reconstruction," Vanni says with sharp dark eyes. "It went to Afghanistan as a response to 9/11, and moved on to its real obsession, Iraq."

I do know that in Afghanistan and Iraq the Bush administration was clue-

less about the wars it faced, declaring victory before the real wars began. The neocons wrote a silly script that had Afghans and Iraqis pulverized by our hi-tech war machine and quickly capitulating, as if the Vietnam debacle never happened, as if the world's guerrilla fighters never learned how to stymie and slowly bleed the world's premier conventional military.

With the U.S. military unable to establish security in Iraq and Afghanistan, our "armies" of reconstruction were soon marooned. Listen to American NGO workers in Afghanistan: "When I came here I thought we would accomplish a lot, not now." "We can't go out in the field anymore, so we can't accomplish much." "If I can help just one farmer, then I will be satisfied." "Nothing is going to change in this country." That is our frontline for reconstruction.

America's consistent failure at modern war-fighting and nation-building reflects a country oblivious to its limitations—even superpowers don't have super powers. The Bush administration's profound miscalculations and deep ignorance merely encouraged our failures. We have never defeated a guerrilla force or succeeded at true nation-building.

So now what? If we walk away from Iraq, we will shed a failed president's obsession. If we walk away from Afghanistan, we might lose much more.

In one month I witnessed the plunge of Afghanistan; in two months I don't want to witness the rise of a genuine threat to America. We need to figure out how to keep al-Qaeda from taking over the Toilet that we never cleaned up. But no more unfulfilled promises to Afghans. I've had enough hunkering down behind Kabul walls. ■

Stewart Nusbaumer served in the U.S. Marines in Vietnam and today is editor of InterventionMag.com.

Border Bargaining

The House must decide whether to block amnesty or split the difference with the Senate.

By W. James Antle III

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG for the Senate's sweeping immigration program to face its first hurdle in the House of Representatives. The problem was process, not policy: the Senate legislation required illegal immigrants to pay back taxes as a condition for receiving amnesty and made newly minted guest workers subject to the federal income tax. The Constitution, however, requires that all revenue-raising measures originate in the House, and the Ways and Means Committee asserted its jurisdiction to temporarily block consideration of the bill.

"These kinds of blue-slip issues come up all the time," says a Capitol Hill staffer. "It is totally about procedure." Usually these technical glitches are easily resolved, but nothing will be simple about reconciling House-Senate differences on immigration. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) suggested a typical legislative maneuver—attaching immigration to a House tax bill already on the floor—to resolve the impasse, only to encounter problems on both sides of the aisle. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) rejected Frist's proposal, which required a House vote to take effect—thus running the risk that lower-house conservatives might try to vote the Senate bill down.

So before the House and Senate even began formal immigration-reform negotiations, headlines appeared suggesting a stalemate. And this was the easy part. As the legislators move beyond parliamentary wrangling and delve into policy specifics, the problems are bound to get worse. The leader of the House negotiating team, Judiciary Committee Chair-

man James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.), has described the two chambers as being "oceans apart" on the issue.

He isn't exaggerating. In December, the House passed an enforcement-only bill that called for a 700-mile security fence along the southern border, a mandatory employment-verification system, and no amnesty of any kind. The Senate version shrank the border fence, weakened the employer-verification provisions, and would legalize approximately 85 percent of the illegal immigrants already in the country.

To avoid the blanket amnesty label, the Senate adopted a tiered system for dealing with illegal aliens. Undocumented workers who have been in the United States for more than five years can apply for legal status without leaving the country; those who have been here for two to five years must go home and apply from a point of entry; illegals who have been here for less than two years are ineligible. But with limited bureaucratic resources and unreliable documentation, these distinctions may prove illusory.

Less familiar sections of the Senate bill are also arousing controversy. The measure's proponents insist that it is not amnesty because even illegals who have been here for more than five years must learn English and pay \$3,200 in fines plus back taxes. But it turns out that 40 percent of their back taxes will be forgiven—a luxury denied American citizens—and they will receive credit for Social Security taxes paid using invalid numbers. The Congressional Budget Office projects that the Senate approach

would double legal immigration over the next 20 years; Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation finds these estimates too conservative.

Among House members, however, nothing elicits stronger opposition than creating a path to citizenship for illegal aliens. Congressman Peter King (R-N.Y.), chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, told reporters, "People would rather see no bill than to see 11 million illegals legalized." Sensenbrenner has insisted that compromise is impossible unless these provisions are removed. The *Washington Post* estimates that 75 percent of House Republicans oppose the Senate bill, largely on these grounds.

Critics aren't limited to the GOP's conservative wing. Congressman Christopher Shays of Connecticut is one of the most liberal Republicans in the House, and he has called citizenship for illegals "a huge mistake." Congressman Charles Bass (R-N.H.) voted with the American Conservative Union just 58 percent of the time in 2005, but he prefers the House bill to the Senate's.

"The congressman believes it is necessary to enforce border security first," says Bass spokeswoman Lindsey Jackson. "He strongly opposes amnesty in any form and wants to avoid anyone jumping in line ahead of those who immigrate legally."

The GOP's near-unanimity on this issue shouldn't be surprising. Moderate Republicans are among the most vulnerable incumbents this fall. Their districts tend to be more competitive, and the Democrats have been unusually successful at candidate recruitment. At-risk

incumbents can ill afford to alienate their constituents and demoralize the Republican base by casting votes for amnesty.

Such concerns were evident even in the Senate, where 10 of the 14 Republicans running for re-election this year voted against the immigration bill. One of the four Democrats to vote no was liberal Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan. Stabenow may remember the role immigration-restrictionist groups played in stirring up opposition to Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), the man she defeated in 2000.

House Republicans have additional reasons for being wary of following the Senate's lead. This isn't the first time they have had legislation foisted on them that was supported by President Bush and passed with more Democratic than Republican votes. The same Bush-Democratic coalition helped produce the Medicare prescription-drug benefit and the No Child Left Behind education-reform law—the two Bush administration initiatives conservatives most oppose.

Yet that doesn't mean the path-to-citizenship language will be stripped easily. Many senators are committed to ensuring that the amnesty stays. "It won't come out of conference if this isn't part of it," Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) told the *Boston Globe*. Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) have also suggested that they wouldn't accept a bill that removed the path to citizenship.

And there are some holdouts even in the House. Congressman Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) co-sponsored a bill to offer temporary-worker status and then citizenship to illegals regardless of how long they have been in the country. (It was the House version of the McCain-Kennedy amnesty.) He still prefers this approach to the Senate's tiered system, but communications director Matthew Specht says, "[Flake] understands how arduous this process will be and he's open to reasonable compromise."

Given the divide between the House and Senate, is compromise actually possible? The answer depends mostly on whether House Republican leaders summon the will to defy President Bush on this issue. Some Republicans—mostly in the Senate, but also a few key members of the House like Congressman Tom Davis (R-Va.)—insist that Congress will be judged harshly if it fails to pass a bill. Others, like Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus Chairman Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.), counter that the political consequences will be worse if they enact a bad bill.

Both House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) and Majority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) have said they won't advance a bill unless it is supported by a majority of the majority. If Frist had followed that rule, the Senate bill would already be dead, as a majority of that chamber's Republicans voted against it. If Hastert and Boehner hold firm, it will be difficult to produce a compromise Senate Democrats will accept—and probably impossible to retain a path to citizenship.

That doesn't mean there aren't any wedges that can be driven between House Republicans, however. Not all congressmen oppose amnesty for the same reasons. Some are against rewarding immigration-law violations out of a sense of fairness but don't object to a guest-worker program that doesn't specifically benefit illegals. Other conservatives oppose increased immigration levels generally, making it very difficult to craft a guest-worker program they can support.

One suggestion has been to allow illegals to participate in temporary-worker programs only if they first return home. Although the Senate bill requires this of some undocumented workers, most Republican senators who favor this approach found the details too lenient and joined immigration restrictionists in voting against it.

Congressman Mike Pence (R-Ind.) has tried to revive this idea in the House with what he describes as a "no-amnesty guest-worker program." Pence is the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, a position that makes him very influential among GOP conservatives, and a member of the Immigration Reform Caucus. One wrinkle that is unique to his plan is that private companies—or, he prefers, "Ellis Island Centers"—would perform the background checks and help place the workers, providing a free-market solution to the Department of Homeland Security's bureaucratic problems.

When Pence unveiled this proposal before the Heritage Foundation, it generated some interest in the conservative press. Sensenbrenner told reporters it could be considered because it wasn't amnesty. Flake issued a press release praising Pence's support for guest workers. But Tancredo and his fellow restrictionists came out against the measure, arguing that in practice it would give preference to illegals already here and that the Ellis Island Centers would prove unworkable.

Tancredo spokesman Will Adams says that he isn't aware of a single House conservative who has actually endorsed the Pence plan, as opposed to just telling reporters they would consider it. Pence's office admits they need to work on "a few of our normally key allies," some of whom have called up in protest. Yet even if Pence can create fissures among conservatives, it is likely that Senate liberals will find it too restrictive.

Attempts at compromise may also bump up against the House majority's desire for self-preservation. Many Republican strategists have advised against any bill that legalizes large numbers of illegal aliens. Congress may negotiate the bill from Washington. But bet the negotiators keep their eyes on primary elections all over the country. ■

Nation Breaking

A soldier discovers that training the Iraqi army is not President Bush's priority.

By Joe W. Guthrie

I DIDN'T GROW UP with dreams of spreading democracy. I was an all-American kid from a small southern town who went to college on a baseball scholarship and joined the National Guard to earn some extra money. During graduate school, recruiters persuaded me to join the Army through ROTC so that after graduation I would enter as an officer. I bought their pitch and believed our newly elected president when he promised no more nation building. My dad told me, "It's a great time to join the military. It has done an excellent job of repairing itself after Vietnam."

I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in December 2002 and, after paratrooper and additional officer training, was transferred from the 82nd Airborne Infantry to the new Stryker Brigade units at Ft. Lewis. In October 2004, I deployed to Iraq.

I went with an open mind. By then, the mission was well underway, and we had heard the negative reports filtering back. But I believed that I could make a difference and felt honored to serve. The fact that I had received more Arabic language and culture training than any other soldier in my battalion made me feel vital to an important mission.

But I was anxious too. I had gotten married just three months before and wondered whether I would ever see my new wife again. I wondered what I would do in a firefight. My whole life I had heard that fear of the unknown is the greatest fear, and in October 2004, it was for me.

Confidence in my training and my government somewhat quelled these

fears. During the flight to Iraq, I thought of my first jump in airborne school three years before. No clearer picture of the proverbial leap of faith existed in my mind—yet I knew greater challenges awaited. I also flashed back to that conversation with my dad when I joined the Guard. Having lived through the Vietnam era, he had always expressed displeasure with certain government institutions during that period. Like many of his generation, he found himself questioning authorities previously considered worthy of unflinching support. I always found these views curious because with the exception of this interlude in American history, my father always supported the government and raised me to do the same. "I don't believe that our government will ever allow our military to become involved in a war like Vietnam again," he told me. "The American people would not stand for it." Those words would haunt me in the months ahead.

* * *

Within 48 hours of our boots touching Iraqi soil, my battalion was on the move to Mosul, which had historically enjoyed a reputation as a center of Mideast commerce, prized for its oilfields. But by the time we arrived, it teetered on the edge of collapse. Iraqi police had nearly all deserted their duties, and lawlessness reigned.

I was designated the Iraqi army liaison officer, an assignment I took seriously. From the outset of the war, both President Bush and my superior officers

had emphasized that training the Iraqi army was key to our mission's success.

But the longer I spent, the more I came to realize that this was not only a lie but an impossible strategy for achieving victory.

Army doctrine and training have not accounted for a unit in combat having both to fight an insurgency and train indigenous peoples to assist in the fight. I started out as a one-man operation that grew into a cell of 60 people who rotated in for a week to a couple of months at a time. That infusion of manpower would seem to bolster the notion that Iraqi training was a priority. In reality, our leadership sent soldiers with suicidal tendencies, weight problems, and disillusionment. In a year's time, we received only one visit from the battalion commander, only one visit from our battalion's operations officer, and only one visit from the battalion executive officer.

This isolation set us up for failure with the Iraqis. Meetings with the Iraqi colonel in our partner Iraqi army battalion were conducted by a master sergeant and me, and almost always a problem arose in these meetings beyond our authority to control. When asked to meet with our Iraqi army colonel, our battalion commander refused.

I began to wonder: if the highest-ranking officers in a battalion did not care to interact with the Iraqis, how were the generals in the Pentagon to know what was going on? How would the president know? I realized that they wouldn't—and they didn't care because training the Iraqis was of little real interest.

From October 2004 to September 2005, fewer than 180 fresh-from-the-streets recruits were trained by our cell and incorporated into the Iraqi army battalion in Mosul, though the battalion's personnel total was exaggerated by the Iraqis. These errors, while reported by our cell, were ignored by our superiors. Between October 2004 and April 2005, we conducted several headcounts of Iraqi army battalion personnel and never found more than 350 present at one time. But the Iraqis recorded 1,300, and the Iraqi figures were taken as accurate. When we reported this discrepancy, we were told we must factor in the number supposedly on vacation. Every month we sent accurate numbers, and in each case we were ordered to count at least 200 soldiers as being on leave. No proof that they were actually on authorized leave was ever provided except for the Iraqi army officers' word.

During our first month in Mosul, we were unable to conduct basic training due to Ramadan, so we opted to focus our efforts on facilities upgrade. But our requests to KBR—Kellogg, Brown and Root, Halliburton's subsidiary company—failed because the contractor would not service any facility housing Iraqis, only Americans. Air conditioning and heat did not exist. Electricity often did not flow. These amenities could have been added easily by KBR.

Our cell searched for help with money from a budget earmarked for Iraqi training but was ultimately unsuccessful. Iraqi contractors were often crooked and more familiar with the American system of payments than we were, our battalion chain of command refused to divert any American supplies or manpower to solve the problem, and giving money to Iraqis to fix their own infrastructure proved worthless because the money simply went into the hands of the highest-ranking Iraqi present.

During our struggles, our U.S. battalion enjoyed much greater success finding contractors for its own projects. Upgrades for our detainee facilities were completed in less than a month, but the contractors responsible for these projects were never allowed to help us.

* * *

In addition to manpower shortages and facility failure, training doctrine was never uniformly approved nor implemented. An example: when we arrived in Mosul, we were given a manual by our preceding unit, which falsely described the procedure for clearing—making sure ammunition was no longer in the chamber of a weapon. The procedure given to us, which had been taught to the Iraqis for months, called for an additional step that did not appear in any manual in the U.S. Army. Upon discovering this error, our cell's master sergeant blacked out all manuals illustrating the errant function and instituted the correct teaching. However, old habits die hard. In January 2005, one of our U.S. soldiers was killed by an Iraqi attempting to clear his weapon inside a Stryker vehicle. He pulled the trigger, consistent with the mistaken teaching he received, and one of our heroes was gone forever. The Army investigators ruled that the faulty system instilled by the American unit preceding us caused the problem. However, this practiced continued. In June 2005, some of the soldiers within our cell witnessed Special Forces soldiers implementing the same procedure that cost our soldier his life. After correcting the Special Forces team, our soldiers were told to "get your nose out of SF business."

In June 2005, Special Forces took over some of our training mission. After a quick tour, they announced that they would initiate driver's training for our Iraqi battalion though we had completed it four months prior. Our master ser-

geant complained to both Special Forces and our battalion commander that this training had already been covered, and he was overruled. Our superiors were so uninterested in the training program that they would have voiced equal approval of Iraqis riding pigs.

In March 2005, we began to push our trainees out on independent missions. They planned, briefed their troops, rehearsed, and executed the missions by themselves. All of these actions were repeated in June 2005, when Special Forces took over. Similarly, beginning in January 2005, every soldier in our Iraqi army battalion had participated in basic rifle marksmanship training. In June 2005, the same training was repeated by Special Forces. There was no coherence to the program—nor discernable progress.

In April 2005, a push began across Iraq to utilize more personnel in Iraqi army training. According to the briefing I was given, a minimum of 15 soldiers made an adequate cell. Our cell already surpassed this number, but our battalion decided to upgrade it to nearly 60 soldiers to satisfy the Bush administration's contention that large numbers of Iraqis were being trained and large numbers of U.S. soldiers were doing the training. But we needed more officers, not soldiers, so many of the newly acquired men ended up sitting around. No one bothered to ask whether a need existed. If anyone had, we would have said that the Iraqis did not have as many people present as U.S. commanders contended and that the Iraqi soldiers supposedly coming off vacation never did so simply because they did not exist. When these problems were brought to our battalion, our integrity was questioned.

Moreover, our daily presence became highly resented by the Iraqis, especially their officers. They felt that the Iraqi army needed to be the sole authority responsible for training. Their battalion

commander told me that any attempt by American officers to live in his training compound would be considered spying. And that was just the start of the conflicts. Most Iraqi officers considered their knowledge of the city and insurgents far superior to American technology and training, while Americans considered the Iraqis undisciplined and lazy.

* * *

Logistical issues compounded these operational headaches. For the first five months of our tour, we received no boots or uniforms for the Iraqis despite numerous searches and deals gone awry. We were told to utilize the local economy, but the only contractor we could find disappeared after we gave him an initial payment of \$20,000. (The vanishing contractor had been recommended by the Iraqi battalion commander.)

Months later, we discovered that two buildings, covered in weeds and rust and seemingly empty, were not. The Iraqis had told us that nothing was housed in these two buildings. One day we decided to open them and discovered enough equipment to outfit three battalions. Some of it read "March 2003"—the leadership of the Iraqi battalion had been hoarding this equipment for years. For all we knew they had been selling the uniforms to terrorist organizations. In addition, we also found a large cache of mines, mortar tubes, machine guns, and ammunition in an adjacent building. The resident Iraqi company commander was ostensibly fired by the Iraqi battalion commander, but we saw him return less than two weeks later. When we reported to our battalion, we were told, "Well, after all, it is their army."

Our cell's replacement arrived in June in combination form. The first part came from two Special Forces teams. The second was part of the MiTT program

(Military Transition Team), consisting of ten soldiers who were either experienced enlisted personnel or officers—meaning they had at least six to ten years time in the Army. I went with other Iraqi Army Liaison Officers from different battalions to Taji to meet with these men and describe what they would face in Mosul. To my dismay, I quickly learned they possessed no knowledge of their final destination. They made the journey with no radio communication, some with only one pair of boots, no information on where they would go or what they would be doing when they got there. I expected to hear questions like "What sort of operational tempo do your Iraqi counterparts possess?" In contrast, I was asked, "Lieutenant, do you have e-mail capability up in Mosul? Nobody has told us anything and I really want to know how I will communicate with my family." I later found out that they were selected mostly from desk jobs in the Recruiting Command or the Pentagon. Yet I listened with them at their initial briefs about how they were performing "a mission that was the most important key to our success in Iraq." If this were true then why were they sending desk jockeys with little or no experience training indigenous soldiers? And why during one of their initial briefings did their leader, a full colonel, have to plead for more boots for his men?

Once these men arrived in Mosul, they were given a two-day welcome briefing. Then they were sent to remote combat outposts in the middle of the worst areas. Their only radios had been given to them by us. Running water worked on occasion. And they received no equipment to outfit their Iraqi counterparts. To this day, MiTT teams operate under the same conditions. Future help probably will not come due to our battalion replacement's apparent apathy: they refused any data concerning our experience despite numerous attempts.

Another logistical problem arose due to the Iraqi army's masterful deception in accounting for their equipment. For the first six months of our tour, our cell inventoried every piece of military equipment their battalion possessed. We reported in April 2005 that we had names showing which soldiers signed out AK ammunition and then returned differing ammunition. (This differing ammo was made during the time of Saddam and is readily available on the market; most of it does not work.) We also had six Iraqi witnesses working in the Iraqi arms room who observed the fraud. My superior officers weren't interested.

In addition, every month the Iraqi army leadership and our cell agreed to a list of items mutually decided to be essential. However, the end of the month's expenditures routinely included space heaters for the Iraqi army leadership's quarters, satellite television for the officers only, and new furniture for the officers, to name just a few items. And trips down to the Iraqi army compound in the wee hours of the morning resulted in all kinds of discoveries. Sometimes I saw Iraqi soldiers sucking gas out of the tanks of the trucks to sell. Another time, I saw two Iraqi soldiers painting a tan Iraqi military truck white in an attempt to sell it on the open market. We were told to "tolerate a certain amount of graft."

Not surprisingly, I never received an accurate vehicle count from the Iraqi army. Each month, I counted the vehicles that the Iraqi army owned, a number that never matched the figures given to me by the Iraqi battalion. To make matters worse, after I turned in the number that I had counted, I would often find my figures altered after brigade released their own report. In April 2005, I documented the fraud in an e-mail. Two days later, I was confronted by two superior officers and told that my reports would no longer be needed.

If I doubted that the Iraqis were any more committed than my own superiors to outfitting and training their army, the answer came after a long presentation to the Iraqi army battalion's executive officer, offering suggestions on his logistics operational plan. I concluded by asking what he thought. "My plan is that you should care for all of our logistical needs," he said. "Why?" I asked. The Iraqi executive officer replied, "You broke our country. Now, you fix it." The essence of a failed policy did not get any clearer than that.

* * *

From October 2004 to June 2005, the prevailing attitude of our battalion—including my own at first—was that the Iraqis were incapable of conducting operations independently. However, after speaking with locals and Iraqi army officers, I reached a different conclusion. The locals asked me why Iraqis were not doing more on missions. Iraqi officers told me that they conducted company-level operations on their own nearly a year prior to our arrival. Did our higher command know and simply not choose to use this information? Or was it a ploy to prolong a state of perpetual war?

I decided to test the theory. In March 2005, I began to send Iraqis out on missions into Mosul, usually unbeknownst to my battalion, and found them capable of conducting missions on their own except when they were hampered by our military values and horrible perception of the local area. When I sent Iraqis out alone, they found evidence and insurgents that we never were able to, though they were none too careful about complying with the Geneva Conventions. Once battalion discovered these missions, they quickly reeled them, and me, in. All Iraqi missions would thereafter be dictated by our U.S. battalion, and I would make sure that the Iraqis performed these missions in

the exact manner in which they were dictated.

During the last week of March, I relayed this new strategy to the Iraqi battalion commander and his underlings. They asked to speak with my battalion commander, but he refused and dismissed the matter, reminding me that all parties would comply with his wishes. Two days later, I argued with two Iraqi officers, who up until then had been my friends. One said that the only reason they would go to an area they knew to be heavily laden with IED ambushes was that they respected me.

That respect was shattered less than an hour later when an IED wounded four of their soldiers. Although I rushed them to the hospital and they lived, the respect I worked for five months to earn vanished. From that point on, my time with the Iraqis was much more difficult.

Our relationships with the locals fared no better. Our line companies spent nearly every waking minute on patrol. The nightly door-kicks on residents' homes proved excellent recruiting tools for local terrorists. I recall several occasions of having to kick in doors to take cover only to hear screaming locals.

Moreover, due to the high frequency of our line companies prowling the city, the Iraqi army and our cell working with them took a very distant backseat in priority. If we needed to discuss a problem with our battalion commander, he was in the city on patrol. If our goal was to turn the city over to the Iraqis, so we could leave, why was he out all the time without the Iraqis? At the very least, if the Iraqis stirred up a hornet's nest among the local people, it's their own nest.

* * *

Though force structure was problematic, training inefficient, logistical support nonexistent, and combat operations illogical, by far the most personally

frustrating factor in fulfilling my assignment was the ocean of financial corruption. Our government has tolerated a systematic culture of "spend to win" that fattens the pockets of the few and accomplishes little.

Each month, along with our cell's master sergeant, I handed a minimum payment of \$100,000 to the Iraqi army battalion. \$50,000 covered their monthly operational budget—facilities upgrades, maintenance parts, etc. The other \$50,000 went toward the battalion's subsistence budget, which allowed each soldier \$90 a month for food. The problem was that the Iraqis said they had 556 soldiers, and we never counted more than 350 at any given time. Yet we were ordered to pay on the basis of the numbers they declared, with the remainder going directly into the Iraqi leadership's pockets.

The operational budget proved to be an even worse disaster. Each month we handed over \$50,000, yet no money was ever spent on tools for the mechanics, no improvements were made to the buildings, no new vehicles were ever purchased. So why did we continue to give \$50,000 each month? The Iraqi army officers would not perform for anything less. We were bribing them to keep up the appearance of a workable fighting force.

Our receipts for these transactions were cleared back through the comptrollers who tracked what U.S. battalions were spending. When it was learned that we were spending \$100,000 a month, we were told that we were not spending enough and were accused of not supporting the mission. The message was clear: the more money we gave the Iraqis, the greater chance of keeping the Iraqi unit together.

We also had a projects account for spending money on the Iraqis. After the theft of the uniform payment of \$20,000, we only used this system two more times. Both resulted in complete failure. In December 2004, we negotiated a con-

tract for 15 Toyota 4x4 pick-up trucks. All were to be no older than 2000, and the price of each was \$11,000, making the total contract value \$165,000. We traveled to Dahuk to make this transaction, but a 1994 model was the newest truck before us. Many of the others were badly damaged and barely running. We called off the deal and in turn angered the Iraqi army battalion's leadership, which had recommended the vendor.

In February 2005, desperate to initiate some progress on new barracks on the Iraqi army battalion compound, we again enlisted the help of the Iraqi army to find a contractor. But the deal fell flat after the he refused anything less than 40 percent of the total price quote for the buildings up front. By our rules, we could not surrender such a sum. (After the failed sale, we returned the funds and were asked by the comptroller if we were sure we wanted to return this money.)

Meanwhile, U.S. Army Civil Affairs began to compensate Iraqi army soldiers for damages incurred by "terrorist" attacks. On one occasion, two Iraqi brothers who were junior officers in our battalion stated that someone burned down their house and shot up their car. They were paid even after we told Civil Affairs that several Iraqi soldiers told us that these men inflicted the destruction themselves. Civil Affairs did not ride out to the site, they merely took the brothers' photos of the damage at face value.

They also rewarded any Iraqi for information concerning insurgents. One soldier brought information on compact discs that he explained was terrorist intelligence. The CDs did show insurgent propaganda but could be purchased at many different marketplaces in Mosul and served no purpose other than general propaganda. Yet Civil Affairs paid off this soldier.

We alerted our battalion leadership to all of this, and some of the information

Israel, which carefully avoided public displays of aggressive advocacy of war against Iraq, is being considerably less circumspect about Iran.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's May 25 address before Congress received no fewer than 18 standing ovations. Olmert was particularly well received by the Solons on the Potomac when he excoriated Iran through dark imagery evocative of Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union and called for decisive action. Israel is also buttressing its case by floating completely fictional information inaccurately described as "intelligence" on Iran's weapons program, saying that Tehran could well have a bomb "in months." U.S. intelligence and the IAEA believe that Iran is, in fact, many years away from having a single low-yield device with no means to deliver it. Israel is also floating a batch of bogus intelligence on Hezbollah, claiming that the group is planning to attack the World Cup competition currently taking place in Germany. That Hezbollah would have little motive to do so appears irrelevant, particularly as the group is not surprisingly being linked to its sponsor, Iran, suggesting that it is really Iran that is targeting the soccer world championship. The level of innuendo has made some American Jewish groups nervous in spite of their normal tendency to march in lockstep with Tel Aviv. They have privately appealed to Olmert to make his views known through "diplomatic channels" and to desist from delivering speeches pressuring the U.S. to attack Iran. They have also appealed to President Bush to stop reiterating America's commitment to defend Israel from Iran, which presumably would apply even if Israel is the aggressor. The Jewish groups believe that war with Iran is coming, something they welcome, but they do not want Jews or Israel to be blamed for it.



Qatar's Emir Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani traveled to Tehran during the first week in May

to explain the political and military ties that the Gulf emirates maintain with Washington, but Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was not in a conciliatory mood. The emir was told that Iran considers the Gulf states to be American lackeys and that an attack on Iran will result in a retaliatory counterstrike on all surrounding countries where the U.S. has bases. Al-Thani, somewhat discomfited by the undiplomatic language, persisted, noting defensively that Qatar hosts the U.S. Central Command but that the Central Command does not really consist of soldiers, only "support types." Ahmadinejad was not convinced by the argument. Qatar's emir has also found that hosting U.S. forces doesn't necessarily buy you very much. Already under fire for the sins of Al-Jazeera, his ambassador in Washington, Nasser bin Hamad al-Khalifa, and his foreign minister, Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani, have been downgraded at State Department and no longer have access to Condoleezza Rice. Rice was reportedly enraged when the emirate permitted the collection of charitable donations for the Palestinians, ignoring a call that she personally made to the foreign ministry insisting that the fundraiser be stopped.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.

was sent up to brigade, but that was as far as the inquiry ever went. The system was set up so that we could not physically account for the money without breaking the rules.

* * *

I returned home in September 2005, grateful and safe, but stripped of the illusions I had taken with me. My experience proved that contrary to countless official pronouncements, the Bush administration has no interest in the Iraqi army training program. We were fighting a war to establish permanent bases in Iraq to better manipulate the flow of Middle East oil. For if this war was about human rights, why were we not in Rwanda? If our mission was about bringing democracy to a region, then why were we not in Cuba? And if the intelligence leading up to this war was merely faulty, why was no one fired?

I believed in my mission, and I wanted the Iraqis I was training to run their own country. But this wasn't an American priority, and I left Mosul feeling that my efforts were either erased or ignored.

That's not to say that the men who died in Iraq died for nothing. They were doing their jobs. But the Bush administration disgraces their memories by stating that our only option is to prolong a losing policy. If I learned anything from the lessons I was charged with teaching, it's that a good military leader examines costs and benefits and adjusts his course accordingly. Yet this administration refuses to learn from its mistakes, level with the soldiers fighting its war, and bring the sad American chapter called Iraq to a close. ■

Joe W. Guthrie served three years in the U.S. Army as an Infantry officer and was honorably discharged in December 2005. He now works as a PE teacher and coach at a private school in Florida.

Bleeding-Heart Libertarian

Charles Murray wants to give you \$10,000.

By Steve Sailer

ONCE A DECADE, Charles Murray publishes a massive data-driven volume such as *Losing Ground* (1984), *The Bell Curve* (1994), and *Human Achievement* (2003). In between, he pens smaller, more philosophical books such as *In Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government* (1988) and *What it Means to Be a Libertarian* (1997).

In Our Hands: A Plan to Replace the Welfare State is Murray's latest little work. Only 127 pages, not counting the elaborate appendices, it offers a striking combination of futuristic policy wonkery and Murray's old-fashioned notions, derived from Aristotle, Jefferson, and his own small-town upbringing, of how people can lead a good life. "Happiness is lasting and justified satisfaction with one's life as a whole," he writes.

Having demonstrated in *Losing Ground* that Great Society poverty programs degraded the poor (a *tour de force* that ultimately led to the successful welfare reform of 1996) but having also documented in *The Bell Curve* that not all of our fellow citizens are cut out to thrive in the highly libertarian society that he would ideally prefer, Murray now offers in *In Our Hands* a "Plan" for a generous but radically simplified welfare state. He suggests abolishing all transfer programs, including Social Security, and replacing them with a single annual grant of \$10,000 to each adult.

I discussed his new book with him via e-mail:

Q. *Is this your follow-up to The Bell Curve, where you documented that*

some people are just unlucky about their endowment of human capital?

A. You're the first person to ask that question. Yes, it is a libertarian's compromise with the realities documented in *The Bell Curve*. The dynamics that the Plan will set in motion are ones that create the "valued places" that Dick Herrnstein and I talked about in the final chapter of *The Bell Curve*. In effect, I'm saying to the Left, "You get to have big government in terms of spending, if you'll give me small government in terms of the government's ability to stage-manage people's lives."

Q. *Are you a "bleeding-heart realist"?*

A. It's a good phrase, and I'd like to use it, but it's not quite right. I don't look at people who have gotten the short end of the stick on IQ (or charm, or whatever) and feel sorry for them. Perhaps more to the point, I don't feel superior to them. I just think they should be able to live in a society where they have access to life's deep satisfactions. In traditional cultures, they do, chiefly through the institutions of family and community. The welfare state artificially debilitates those institutions. I'm saying to the government, "stop it." If I could do it through a purely libertarian solution, I would, but I'm not bothered by supplementing the income of people who are working hard, doing everything right, and happen to live in an age where their skills aren't worth much. If there's enough money sloshing around, as there is in the 21st century, that seems to me to be an okay thing to do even if,

strictly speaking, I do not think it is a morally obligatory thing to do.

Q. *How do you keep people from blowing their \$10k at the dog track?*

A. It's not as if I'm giving them a hundred \$100 bills in a brown paper bag on January 1st every year. They get a monthly electronic deposit to a bank account. So the short answers to your question are:

I don't, they can only blow one month's deposit at a time, and the friend the dog track loser has to borrow from to get through to the next deposit is going to be telling him to get his act together in no uncertain terms and putting pressure on him that is more effective than any other way of dealing with human frailty.

Call me a wild and crazy idealist, but I think just about everybody is capable of learning from their mistakes. And if they don't, they're no worse off under the Plan than they are under the current system.

Q. *How does the Plan differ from the Guaranteed Annual Income or Negative Income Tax devised by Milton Friedman, pushed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan when he was Richard Nixon's chief domestic advisor, and defeated politically by then Gov. Ronald Reagan?*

A. Three huge differences from the NIT versions that were bruited about during the 1960s and 1970s:

The Plan replaces every other form of transfer payment and welfare benefit. Without replacement, none of the positive social signals and pressures I describe in the book will take hold.

People don't start losing the grant as soon as they take a low-income job. They keep the entire \$10,000 up until they're making \$25,000 of earned income (a net of \$35,000) and keep half at \$50,000 or more of earned income. This sidesteps the great bulk of the work

disincentives that have plagued every kind of welfare program, which have imposed sky-high marginal tax rates. The Plan lures people into working until they can't afford to quit.

Everyone gets the grant, not just people at the very bottom of the income ladder, and—this is crucial—everyone knows that everyone else is getting it. The options open to us for dealing with people who screw up their lives are far different when they have a known income stream than when they can throw up their hands and say, "There's nothing I can do."

Q. *Ten grand goes a lot farther in Mississippi than in California. Should poor people in expensive states get more, or should they move to cheaper states?*

A. It's up to them. Isn't that wonderful?

Q. *You advocate a "mandatory single pool" health insurance system. How would that differ from the Canadian single payer system?*

A. Insurance companies can compete like crazy under the Plan on every dimension except one: they can't charge a different rate for someone whose parents had multiple sclerosis and someone whose parents lived to be 99. Whatever menu of alternative plans they offer to potential customers, the rates have to spread the costs of paying for multiple sclerosis across the whole population. In an age when genetic knowledge about susceptibility to disease is exploding, this seems to me an inevitable—and morally appropriate—legal constraint to put on health insurers, even though it obviously raises a number of practical problems.

Q. *By cutting the link between health insurance and employment, would the Plan allow American workers to change*

jobs more readily, thus avoiding some of the Eurosclerosis that has rigidified the European labor market?

A. It came as an afterthought when I was working through the effects of the Plan, but it's a major benefit. The Plan not only liberates people to move from job to job, incrementally improving their situations, it also liberates the welfare mom who now is tied to the city where she's jumped through all the hoops to get on the food stamp, Medicaid, and welfare rolls.

Q. *Libertarianism is usually seen as a philosophy that places a very high value on individualism. Yet you emphasize that a more libertarian society would have to be a more neighborly one. Why?*

A. I've never seen a conflict between individualism and neighborliness. The core of libertarianism, in my view, is that everyone is required to elicit the voluntary co-operation of others—force and fraud being the great evils, to be severely punished, in a libertarian world. If the only way you can build a life is by getting people to do what you want voluntarily, doesn't that mean that a high degree of neighborliness, helpfulness, and all-around nice-guyism are built into the warp and woof of the culture? And in fact that's the way American society worked in its most libertarian decades and most libertarian sections of the country—not perfectly of course, but pretty damned well.

Q. *Can I be a test case and get \$10,000?*

A. No test cases. I'm fomenting revolution here. ■

Steve Sailer is TAC's film critic and VDARE.com's Monday morning columnist.

Losing Liberties Left and Right

The Republican embrace of Big Government makes strange bedfellows.

By Doug Bandow and Michael D. Ostrolenk

THE RIGHT HAS BECOME dangerous terrain for dissent. While President Bush and the Republican Congress were busy burying the traditional conservative agenda, neoconservatives created a political priesthood to root out ideological heresies. Anyone foolish enough to advocate fiscal responsibility, federalism, executive accountability, individual liberty, or political humility was accused of liberalism if not treason. Old conservative denunciations of social engineering gave way to new conservative promises to end evil abroad.

Republican apparatchiks, enraptured with control of both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, joined the parade. Grasping power and enjoying the perks of office became the animating features of GOP rule. Exactly how officials used their authority was considered unimportant.

Even many traditionalists repressed their doubts about administration policies, treating politics as a game between the blue team and the red team. Today an allegedly conservative Republican government believes that it can fix marriages at home and instill democracy abroad.

Perhaps the most obvious victim of this revolution on the Right is the Constitution. Establishment support for limits on government power and protections of personal liberties has essentially collapsed. Today conservative policymakers offer lock-step support for expansive government. Other than the commitment to cut taxes, which may not be sustainable in the midst of rapidly increasing spending, Republicans consistently choose the state over the individual.

The result has been an extraordinary aggrandizement of national and executive power. The president says that he is entitled to take essentially any step he deems necessary to prosecute the war—a conflict lacking both a formal declaration and a likely end. Thus his enhanced power might never lapse. In his view, neither Constitution nor Congress constrains him.

Republicans have become Wilsonians on steroids, pushing a foreign policy based on militarized nation-building and expansive international assistance programs. GOP politicians who once resisted creation of the Department of Education now laud the opening of schools in Iraq.

The Republican Congress has shown little inclination to challenge the president even when his officials have lied to lawmakers, as they did when they concealed the real costs of the Medicare drug program or engaged in endless other, more modest, deceptions.

Although international issues, particularly the invasion and occupation of Iraq, have created the greatest public furor, government power also has been steadily advancing on the domestic side. Examples abound: the use of PATRIOT Act powers to prosecute Americans for non-terrorist offenses; turning federal anti-terrorist grants into a pork barrel for local politicians; creating a national identification card system through the REAL ID Act and complementary pieces of legislation; treating all Americans as criminals, sacrificing their Fourth Amendment protections; executive and legislative proposals violating patient privacy to advance national health-care

goals by creating a national medical information Internet system; increasing federal intrusion in the classroom; proposals for widespread federally-supported mental-health screening programs in government schools and for federal funding to transform private and public mental-health delivery systems.

Obviously one can make a legitimate—though unpersuasive—argument for expanded government power in all of these cases. But those who make a bigger Leviathan the standard rather than the exception no longer support limited, constitutional government and individual freedom.

What, then, are advocates of smaller government to do? Conservatives who really believe in limited government have found nowhere to turn—certainly not to Leviathan's propagandists who now dominate the GOP. Working within the Republican system is largely hopeless at this time, for the White House treats even friendly criticism as equivalent to treason. Only fear of a humiliating loss, as was looming in the case of the nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court, has caused the president to change course. Otherwise the administration believes that its policies emerge through a political form of Immaculate Conception.

With the president's poll ratings low and midterm elections approaching, Congress is proving more willing to confront the White House. But only over symbolic issues of populist concern, such as foreign management of American ports. The congressional party retreated on the far more serious issue of warrantless spying by the NSA.

Somewhat more debate has broken out within the conservative movement. This year's Conservative Political Action Conference saw occasional flashes of dissent from the new Republican big-government orthodoxy. But not everyone was happy about those who flouted neoconservative groupthink.

For instance, Cliff Kincaid and Roger Arnoff complained about the participation of the ACLU and two anti-drug-war groups, the Marijuana Policy Project and the Drug Policy Alliance. "This bizarre turn of events demonstrates that some conservatives have lost their nerve in the war on drugs—and also in the war on terrorism." Columnist Don Feder echoed their criticism.

Actually, many conservatives, like William F. Buckley and most of his young acolytes at *National Review*, never have been enamored with drug prohibition. Don Feder claims that, other than the Cato Institute, "I can't think of a single legitimate group on the right that shares this societal death wish." But he's obviously never talked with former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson, a conservative Republican, or the many prosecutors and cops who have formed Law Enforcement Against Prohibition. He's missed recent criticism of the drug war by editorial page editors of the *Wall Street Journal*.

Dissatisfaction with the counterproductive drug laws is pervasive but often goes unstated, out of fear of just the sort of demonization attempted by Kincaid, Arnoff, and Feder. And while the ACLU is often wrong, a commitment to protecting civil liberties even as one attempts to confront the problem of terrorism demonstrates good sense, not weakness.

Kincaid and Arnoff poured special scorn on the Liberty Coalition, which brings together such diverse groups as the American Conservative Union and People for the American Way. Even

former Congressman Bob Barr, a leader of the impeachment of President Bill Clinton now active with the Liberty Coalition, is attacked for having "left-wing associates." Imagine that.

The critics' bottom line is simple. Proclaims Feder: CPAC "is now unwittingly aiding America's enemies." Kincaid and Arnoff conclude, "Like the case of CPAC, the Liberty Coalition looks like an exercise in which the left-wingers are taking conservatives for a ride. And it looks like Al Gore's friend Ted Kennedy is the driver."

But if conservatives are being taken for a ride, the drivers are George W. Bush, Denny Hastert, and Bill Frist. Liberal groups that attend CPAC or participate in the Liberty Coalition don't use conservative rhetoric while implementing liberal policies. They don't troll for conservative votes while sacrificing conservative principles. They remain unashamedly—though mostly mistakenly—liberal.

But they share some basic principles with traditional conservatives, especially a concern over an ever expanding Leviathan state. LC's interests span the spectrum from "liberal" to "conservative." The organization has established working groups on such issues as NSA warrantless surveillance, medical privacy, drug enforcement, and misuse of Social Security numbers.

Are conservatives taking liberals for a ride by looking at the use of Social Security numbers here, there, and everywhere? Or in seeking to deny Uncle Sam access to everyone's medical records? No.

The need for co-operation across ideological boundaries is essential. Consider free speech concerns. Conservatives who want to protest abortion have as much interest in protecting the First Amendment as do liberals who want to protest the Iraq War. Indeed, John Whitehead of the Rutherford Institute is among those opposing new legislation to restrict the

right to demonstrate at events deemed to be of "national significance." Warns the conservative Whitehead, "Countless congressional actions are passed every year seeking to address legitimate and pressing problems. But many of them, like this one, naïvely assume that they will be enforced by individuals who have a clear understanding of and appreciation for our Bill of Rights."

That appreciation is best taught by a transpartisan coalition. Is such co-operation likely to survive when the Democrats regain power, as they undoubtedly will in time? More specifically, would left-wing members of the LC return to liberal authoritarianism should, say, Hillary Clinton be elected president in 2008?

Anything is possible, but many on the Left seem chastened by their experience with the Bush administration. Liberals, more than conservatives, today understand that any power granted to government is likely to be wielded at some point by one's political adversaries. Even if the Left could trust another Clinton administration, and not all liberals believe that they could, they could not be so certain about succeeding regimes, Democrat or Republican.

In any case, predicating the Right's behavior today on predictions of the Left's behavior in the future makes no sense. If conservatives are serious about advancing limited government and individual rights, they need to find allies wherever they exist. Today that means looking to the Left as much as, if not more than, to the Republican political establishment. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[A *Prairie Home Companion*]

The Mild, Mild Midwest

By Steve Sailer

NOVELIST DOUGLAS COUPLAND once speculated about the existence of a Sheraton enzyme that kicks in at age 28 so that travelers can no longer imagine sleeping on friends' floors.

Similarly, there may be a Garrison Keillor enzyme. After a lifetime of echoing Homer Simpson's baffled response to the dry wit of Keillor's public-radio variety show, "A *Prairie Home Companion*"—"Be more funny!"—I now find myself musing, "Hey, this guy's not half bad ..."

For most of us, acting our age requires an awkward improvisation for which we've tried to avoid preparing. Keillor, however, has always had the soul of a 63-year-old, and now that he's finally attained that age on the calendar, he's the Grand Master at it.

The Mark Twain of Minnesota has at last made a movie out his "Prairie Home Companion," which he's been broadcasting live for two hours every Saturday, 32 weeks per year since 1974, when he got the inspiration while writing a profile of Nashville's Grand Ole Opry for *The New Yorker*. The low-key film version is merely a fictionalized rendition of his show, with lots of unfashionable old songs like "Frankie & Johnnie" and a

little backstage drama about how after tonight's performance the series is being shut down by a soulless Texas corporation.

In a bit of Blue-State humor, such as it is, one character gripes, "Don't make fun of Texans just because they talk funny, their eyes don't focus, and the flesh is rotting from their bones." Keillor used to write an advice column for *Salon* in which his primary message was to "bust loose." Good advice, I'm sure, for the gentle souls who look to Garrison Keillor as a role model but perhaps not a reliable general worldview. Minnesotans like Keillor tend to be politically liberal because they are so personally conservative by nature and nurture that they can't imagine that anybody else might need to be restrained by law or tradition. The more hell-raising Texans, in contrast, take a less softheaded view.

In reality, "A *Prairie Home Companion*" is a financial gusher, allowing Keillor and his third wife to own the finest home in St. Paul. As I write, Keillor's road show is playing the 17,000-seat Hollywood Bowl, of all places, where the \$120 tickets are sold out.

What little tension the movie generates emerges from the sentimental singers' attempts to persuade Keillor to say a few words of eulogy to the audience. The resolutely withdrawn host, though, feels that mentioning the cancellation would betray his blandly chipper Midwestern upbringing: "I believe in looking reality straight in the eye and denying it."

To lower the whippersnapper index even further, Keillor persuaded octogenarian Robert Altman to direct. Critics still intoxicated by the *auteur* theory have struggled to find something pro-

found to say about how this film encapsulates Altman's long (and, to be frank, erratic) career, but let's face it, this is Keillor's movie, not Altman's, although the director does a perfectly fine job.

"A *Prairie Home Companion*" turns out to be that rarity in Altman's roster: neither a near classic, such as "Gosford Park" or "Nashville," nor a dud, like "Dr. T and the Women." It's good clean fun for middle-aged white folks, although not much more. Unfortunately, the budget was too cheap to leave the theatre, so there's no visit to Keillor's mythical small town, Lake Wobegon, where all the children are above average.

Altman's prestige rounded up a first-rate cast to play Keillor's characters, including Kevin Kline as the Phillip Marlowe-inspired Guy Noir (to whom Kline adds a touch of Inspector Clouseau), and Woody Harrelson and John C. Reilly as the lonesome cowboys Dusty and Lefty.

Meryl Streep and Lily Tomlin are a sister act, Yolanda and Rhonda Johnson. Streep no longer has quite the bravura singing voice that she spectacularly unveiled in "Ironweed" and "Postcards From the Edge," which inspired much concern among her rivals over whether there was anything she couldn't do, but she can still sell a song.

Virginia Madsen of "Sideways" portrays an angel who is miffed at Keillor because she died in a car crash caused by laughing too hard at his penguin joke—one penguin says, "You look like you're wearing a tuxedo," and the other replies, "What makes you think I'm not?"—which turned out not to be terribly funny now that she has all eternity to think about it. ■

Rated PG-13 for risqué humor.

BOOKS

[June 1941: *Hitler and Stalin*,
John Lukacs, Yale, 169 pages]

A Tale of Two Tyrants

By Lee Congdon

THOSE WHO ARE FAMILIAR with John Lukacs's work know that no historical figure, not even Winston Churchill, has claimed more of his attention than Adolf Hitler. Of course, he is far from being the only historian to have been drawn to the Nazi Führer's career. In one of his finest works, *The Hitler of History*, he conducted a critical and sophisticated discussion with many of those who share his interest, if not his personal involvement—had the Germans won World War II, Lukacs might well have lost his life. He was 20 when, on March 19, 1944, Hitler's armies occupied Budapest, the city of his birth, and Adolf Eichmann began to organize the deportation of Hungary's Jews to Auschwitz. By early July the Germans and their Hungarian collaborators had sent 400,000 human beings to their deaths.

This spelled danger for Lukacs, whose father was Catholic but whose mother was Jewish. In hiding with her, he knew, as he wrote in his *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, that if he were "to be found out by the National Socialists or by the field gendarmerie I could be shot or hanged on the spot." Somehow they managed to survive until the Russians fought their way into the city.

Lukacs has always been grateful to the Red Army and to all those who helped to destroy the Third Reich. Toward Churchill, who in the spring of 1940 refused to negotiate with the Nazi leader, he has adopted an almost worshipful attitude. By continuing the struggle in the face of overwhelming odds, the resolute prime minister "saved

Britain, and Europe, and Western civilization"—and Lukacs himself. Lukacs wrote about that pivotal moment in history in *Five Days in London: May 1940*, a masterly miniature that reflected his ongoing intent to evoke a specific place at a specific time in order to shed light on the larger movements of history. In addition to London in 1940, he has written about Budapest in 1900, London and Berlin in May, June, and July 1940, Europe and America in 1945, and, in his brilliant *A Thread of Years*, various cities on both sides of the Atlantic beginning in 1901 and ending in 1969.

In the present volume the places are Berlin, Moscow, London, and Washington; the time June 1941. On the 22nd day of that month, Hitler ordered his armies into Soviet Russia, an act that we now know was the most important turning point in World War II because, as Lukacs rightly observes, the British and Americans could not have conquered Nazi Germany without Russia as an ally. That this is so helps to explain the sympathy with which he writes of the Soviet Union (or, as he prefers, "Russia") and of Stalin. Not, of course, that he views either through uncritical lenses. He has always regarded the Russians as a backward, even a primitive, people, but for precisely that reason he is unwilling to hold them fully responsible for their actions. The Germans, on the other hand, have, in his judgment, no excuse: "they were the most educated people in the world."

It is a biographical fact of some importance, I think, that Lukacs left Hungary in 1946, two years before the Hungarian Stalinists consolidated their power—hence while he experienced Nazi tyranny, he did not suffer communist dictatorship. That is one reason he has always maintained that communism was not nearly as toxic as National Socialism. Moreover, it makes some sense of his almost obsessive anti-anti-communism, which is again on full display in this book. To him communism is so at odds with reality that it need occasion no undue alarm; it attracts only a limited number of disaffected intellec-

tuals. Anti-communism, because it possesses wider appeal, has, he argues, been the source of greater evils. It helped to elevate Hitler to power and to convince others that he was Europe's last hope against a crusading Bolshevism.

And even if Hitler was not as anti-communist as he pretended to be—consider the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939—he recognized its political appeal and capitalized on it. Anti-communists therefore tend, in Lukacs's view, to be Germanophiles who are likely to have a weakness for Hitler; and some American conservatives are among their number. That suspicion explains why he has been unsparing in his criticism of such political figures as Hoover, Taft, Eisenhower, and especially Reagan, "who, thirty years after Stalin's death, kept naming the Soviet Union the Evil Empire, and arming the United States against it on land, on sea, in air, and in space." As late as 1989, he tells us, William F. Buckley Jr., "who had much to do with the 'conservative' movement propelling Reagan to power," suggested that it would have been better for the world had Hitler conquered Moscow.

To Lukacs such a proposition is unforgivable. Stalin was never as dangerous as Hitler because even his so-called communism was merely verbal; he was in fact "a Caucasian chieftain." Elsewhere in the book, he identifies the Soviet leader as a Russian nationalist, even though he was a Georgian who never displayed the slightest sympathy for Russians. Was he then, as Lukacs also claims, the reincarnation of Ivan the Terrible, another in a long tradition of Russian tyrants? This is an argument that Richard Pipes, Tibor Szamuely, and others have also advanced, and there is some truth in it, though, as Lukacs likes to say, not enough. Stalin's domestic "experiments" went far beyond anything attempted or even contemplated by Ivan or Peter the Great; that becomes clear when one compares his rule to those of his true peers, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, and other communist despots.

To be fair, Lukacs does point to the “discrepancy” between Stalin’s foreign policy and his domestic terror, but that is only in passing. He focuses his attention on the former and concludes that by 1939 the Man of Steel had become a “statesman.” For this claim there is not much evidence. In his dealings with other countries, Stalin was an opportunist; to be sure, he was more cautious than Hitler but only, according to George Kennan, because he feared placing his own power at risk. For him, that is, national interest and personal interest were one.

Suspicious to the point of paranoia, Stalin nevertheless trusted Hitler to honor their non-aggression pact and refused to believe reliable reports from intelligence sources in the West that the Nazi leader was preparing an attack. Lukacs devotes proper attention to this story, making good use of David E. Murphy’s *What Stalin Knew: The Enigma of Barbarossa*, in part because he does not read Russian, an inability that he describes as a “limitation.” (He did, however, have access to some translations from Russian.) Lukacs thinks this strange and irresponsible behavior can be explained by Stalin’s admiration for Hitler and his belief that the British and Americans were attempting to trick him. But what is most important to Lukacs is the fact that, after a period of near inability to act, the Soviet dictator rallied a people and an army without whose sacrifice and tenacity Hitler would have won his war. “God,” Lukacs quotes a Portuguese proverb, “writes straight with crooked lines.”

This book is not, however, a mini-biography of Stalin—or of Hitler. It is a study of the relationship between the two dictators and a challenge to those who maintain that history “is ruled by vast economic and material forces and not by individual persons.” As in previous works from Lukacs’s pen, Hitler is here the key individual. He presents him too as a “statesman,” almost a genius—not, to be sure, by way of praise but of emphasizing his moral culpability. One wonders, though, whether he does not

give the devil more than his due. Was Hitler a statesman or a cunning and reckless adventurer whose opponents were so paralyzed by their fear of another and more terrible European war that they saw no alternative to appeasement? One thing is certain: his decision to invade Russia was not an example of mature and responsible statesmanship.

Lukacs argues convincingly that the Nazi warlord believed that a defeat of Russia would force the British to sue for peace. In support of this claim, he cites a diary entry of June 14, 1941 in which Gen. Franz Halder wrote of Hitler’s calculation “that the collapse of Russia will induce England to give up the struggle. The main enemy is still Britain.” We know now that this, like Stalin’s reliance upon Hitler’s word, was a serious miscalculation. Churchill would never, under any circumstances, have capitulated and Russia, despite staggering losses for which Stalin bore his share of responsibility, could not be defeated. The Red Army’s poor performance in the 1939-40 Winter War with Finland was not reflective of its real strength.

The consequences of June 22, 1941 for Hitler are obvious—as powerful as his armies were, they were no match for the combined forces of the Russians, the British, and the Americans. Less immediately obvious, perhaps, “the most horrible of the consequences of 22 June 1941 involved the mass murder of Jews living in Europe and in the provinces of the Soviet Union overrun by the Germans.” Millions of Jews in eastern Poland, Ukraine, White Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bessarabia, and Bukovina suddenly found themselves at Hitler’s mercy. Elated at first by news of the German attack and Russia’s resulting about-face, the Jews, Lukacs writes with sorrow, “could not know or even imagine” that that event would “be followed by their and their relatives’ Holocaust.” ■

Lee Congdon is writing a book on George F. Kennan.

[*The Good Fight: Why Liberals—and Only Liberals—Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again*, Peter Beinart, HarperCollins, 288 pages]

Getting the Left Into Fighting Shape

By Nicholas von Hoffman

THIS BOOK HAS the wrong subtitle. Readers of the *The Good Fight: Why Liberals—and Only Liberals—Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again* would get more value for their dollar if the book had been *How (Not Why) Liberals Can Win the War*, etc.

No matter. This book has to be read as part of the thrust, parry, and jostle going on within the milky political spiral that is the Democratic Party. The author, Peter Beinart, is a war Democrat. His allegiance is to the Lieberman faction in the party. “Just as Vietnam turned liberals against the cold war, Iraq has now turned them [Howard Dean-type liberals] against the war on terror. America badly needs an alternative vision,” he writes, “for fighting global jihad. And yet the liberalism emerging today denies that fighting global jihad should even be a priority.”

Beinart himself is one of a string of *New Republic* guppies who have popped out of this pool watered by the rich men who own the magazine and are loosely affiliated with other rich war Democrats whose money has bought them no small control over the party’s congressional wing. This faction’s control used to extend to the party’s day-in-day-out precinct workers, who tend to be hair-up-the-behind lefties of one sort or another, because the lefties had scant ability to raise campaign money.

Then came the Internet, which has given birth to such cyberspace progeny as Moveon.org, organizations that have

made it possible for the party porters to raise many millions of dollars. For the first time since the heyday of Walter Reuther and the United Automobile Workers, the left wing of the Democratic Party has something resembling an independent financial base. It is not enough of a base to go it alone, but it is enough to worry Marty Peretz, the very rich co-owner of *The New Republic*, and his faction, lest the Democratic Party go into open rebellion against American Middle Eastern policy. Beinart has been sent hopping off his lily pad to provide a rationale, or a "vision" as he would put it, to rank-and-file liberal Democrats for staying the course.

Peter Beinart may get a raise from Marty, for whom he still works, but he will be astonishingly lucky if the people whom he wishes to convert to his brand of hair-on-the-chest, war-waging liberalism read his book. He backed the invasion of Iraq, so the people he seeks to reach will question his judgment out of the gate. Nor will his confession of error in the book's introduction be sufficient for him to be taken seriously.

Will anybody of any stripe take Beinart seriously? The man has written a book about the war on terror, a term the Left, at least, is suspicious of, without once considering oil or Israel. Whether or not one thinks that oil was a motive—or even the motive—for deciding to invade the Middle Eastern nation with energy reserves perhaps second only to Saudi Arabia, an author must at least discuss the topic. Anyone reading Beinart's book could assume the United States was still a coal-burning, steam-puffing, early 20th-century society. Where does Beinart live?

Well, he doesn't live in Israel. For the purposes of this book Israel may as well not exist. It's there for everyone else, however. How in Sam Hill can anyone have thought up a book that purports to discuss the origins and causes of terrorism and the war thereon without at least refuting the broadly held conviction that Arabs first, and Muslims secondarily, have been maddened and driven to the bloodiest acts because of

the fate of their Palestinian confreres? A book on the Middle East, Islam, and terror that ignores the Israel-Palestine disaster? A book on Christianity that fails to mention Jesus? Beinart has written one. Yet if there is a single issue that agitates left-liberal Democrats, the ones who do the work on election day, it is this one.

Beinart is of the opinion that "soft" liberals, the sort who are prone to see 9/11 as metaphorical chickens coming home to roost, all but guarantee a long future of electoral defeats for the Democratic Party. He wants them to toughen up and face facts, reality, the music, whatever. To make this point he has included moments in *The Good Fight* when he would have us believe that Michael Moore, a wingnut if there ever was one, is the chief expositor of the lib-lab faction's position. Assuredly, liberals of the kind Beinart wishes to convert enjoy Sir Michael's cinema, but

those who are even half literate are able to separate emotion, fact, and error in the unprepossessing Moore's work. Beinart would have set himself up a more difficult to refute lib-lab opponent had he gone after Noam Chomsky instead of the roly-poly, hirsute knight errant of the Left.

Without oil and without Israel, Beinart is left with only one element in his disquisition on terrorism and how to stamp it out—fanatical Islam. The gist of Beinart's thinking is that the Salafist Muslim subgroup of which Osama bin Laden is part represents a totalitarianism akin to Soviet communism. Judging from his source notes, Beinart does not speak or read Arabic. Thus his delineation of what is what in Islam is secondhand stuff—which does not necessarily mean he is wrong, but it does mean that his analysis of how a bin Laden came to be and what he may or may not represent is not to be relied on.

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He is not an Arabist or a scholar of Islam, and in a period where there are so many people with little to no training in these fields sounding off in every direction, a prudent person will not put his trust in yet another guy who has read a bunch of books about a bunch of other books and now believes he is equipped to provide a reading public with authoritative analysis.

Beinart has reasons for replacing the hammer and sickle with a crescent. As he sees it, today's liberals are divided much as they were in the late 1940s over communism. The hard liberals banded together in organizations such as Americans for Democratic Action and commenced the Cold War; the soft liberals poooh-pooohed the communist menace, shunned confrontation, and became peaceniks.

In Beinart's estimation they live on in the persons of 21st-century liberals who are prone to suggest that America has brought its terrorist woes on itself. They are "Wallacites," the modern incarnation of the followers of Henry A. Wallace, a long forgotten one-term vice president who ran a Communist-infiltrated fourth-party presidential peace campaign in 1948 and got so few votes he has a hard time even making the footnotes in the history books.

The key to winning elections and defeating terrorism, Beinart wants us to believe, is to follow the road trod by the hard liberals personified in the careers of such people as Hubert Humphrey, another one-term vice president. Humphrey and his fellow liberal Cold Warriors had the exactly right combination of policies. Domestically, Beinart has them advancing Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and, in foreign policy, pursuing a strategy of containment as opposed to conservative Republicans wildly and dangerously thrusting at the communist foe.

It is a puzzle as to why such a large chunk of the book is given over to rehashing the factional infighting on the American liberal Left that took place more than half a century ago. It does give Beinart a chance to do some big-league kowtowing in the direction of Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and the other superannuated ladies and gentlemen who took part in these long-forgotten imbroglios. It almost seems as though Beinart were settling old scores on behalf of his grandparents, as though he were carrying on a dynastic quarrel about which we readers can only guess.

Few in the Democratic Party's contemporary Left have connections to the arguments at the dawn of the Cold War,

a struggle, it might be remembered, whose termination will soon be a generation in the past. More typical of the modern Democratic Left may be the man who is the party's national chairman, Howard Brush Dean III. Far from having ancestors who flirted with the Commies or organized rubber workers in Akron, Ohio, in the 1930s, Dean is from Park Avenue and went to Yale, after which he landed his first job on Wall Street. Connecticut may be both the richest and most liberal state in the Union. It is filled to overflowing with liberal Democrats who could not care less or be less influenced by the ancient splits and splats that preoccupy Peter Beinart.

Moreover, much of what Beinart has to say about American politics and policy in the Cold War decades is debatable. Some is close to being wrong as, for instance, Beinart's making Whitaker Chambers into a collaborator in Joe McCarthy's escapades, but he needs to do what he does to make the liberalism of that era stand out as something different from conservative foreign policy. A different reading of the record might conclude the American stance *vis-a-vis* the Soviet Union was generally bipartisan.

Nevertheless liberals now must, it seems, do as their liberal ancestors did, "So liberalism's first response to totalitarianism in a globalized world is freedom broadly defined—freedom as both greater liberty and greater equality of opportunity," writes our author. The latter point is important for Beinart, who believes poverty is a contributing cause of terrorism, another debatable proposition.

If this sounds mish-mashy and vaguely abstract, as grandiose sentiments often are, *The Good Fight* is. Not a book destined to be remembered. ■

Nicholas von Hoffman is a former columnist for the Washington Post and Point-Counterpoint commentator for CBS's 60 Minutes. He is the author of many books, including A Devil's Dictionary of Business.

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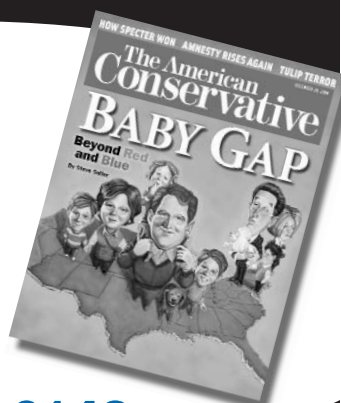
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[Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography, David S. Brown, University of Chicago Press, 291 pages]

Outsider Intellectual

By Paul Gottfried

DAVID BROWN'S study of Richard Hofstadter (1916-70), the Columbia University historian and the author of the still popular *American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It*, is the only full-length biography known to me of this figure who once bestrode the New York academic scene. Although his books on American political movements and American historians still sell in large numbers, Hofstadter, the man and the scholar, is less well known today than when he basked in both the praise of journalists and fellow-historians and won Pulitzer Prizes.

The title of Brown's book may be misleading, for he offers far more than a record of Hofstadter's intellectual development. He provides a richly detailed biography, one that took form through extensive interviews and correspondence with his subject's surviving family, including Hofstadter's wife Beatrice, his son and daughter, and those of his colleagues and students who spoke to the biographer. (An appendix listing Hofstadter's graduate students reads like a "Who's Who" of today's establishment American historians.) It speaks well for his critical sense that the author sifted the wheat from the chaff in his evaluation of collected interviews. Whether he serves up that lavish praise that his sources bestowed on his subject is open to question. Nor has he produced anything as naïve as what one of his blurbers attributes to him, a demonstration that Hofstadter had lived a "splendid life" and, contrary to "widespread misreadings," had showed an "enduring commitment to liberalism."

There are two arguments that run through this biography and raise it above the level of mere factual informa-

tion. Brown describes in detail Hofstadter's family background and social milieu as a means of partially explaining his cogent power as a revisionist historian. Also the book indicates how Hofstadter's literary and interpretive powers were connected to his sense of marginality, a condition that limited as well as fired his historical imagination. In *The Progressive Historians*, Hofstadter may have illustrated a case of the pot calling the kettle black when he went after the "poet-historian of democracy," Frederick Jackson Turner. A late 19th- and early 20th-century American exponent of frontier society, whose ideas and images long imprinted our Western movies, Turner, according to Hofstadter, had blithely overlooked the seamy side of frontier societies. Jackson had tried to separate what is distinctively American from both Europe and the East, but the frontier world he idealized reflected ancient prejudices, "revealing the anti-intellectualism, racism, violence, and vigilante justice" that Hofstadter associated with nativist democracy. In his description of an America vastly different from his preferred Eastern urban one, Hofstadter displayed insular attitudes. It would not be presumptuous to ask whether American cities have not

democratic mask. His debunking of WASP cultural icons, however, did not keep him from reacting passionately when student leftists occupied the buildings of Columbia University in 1968. Hofstadter responded by painting that situation in the terms that he had previously reserved for "anti-intellectual," WASP rural bigotry. But by then he was suffering from the onset of leukemia, which claimed his life two years later, while he was still at the height of his writing abilities.

Although detachment was not Hofstadter's strong suit, his passions and a remarkable flair for images and unforgettable prose combined to make him a powerful educational force. His closest parallels were such European historians as Heinrich Treitschke and Thomas Macaulay, who in the 19th-century used their literary and imaginative talents to fashion popular historical thinking. Although the results wrought by such authors were not always happy, that they had extraordinary lyrical and expository talents is undeniable. And if one can put aside scholarly reservations, one might still find such popular historians worth reading as an aesthetic experience. Although it was Max Weber who brought up the Marx parallel first

BROWN MAKES CLEAR THAT RICHARD HOFSTADTER NEVER LOST HIS SENSE OF BEING ON THE OUTSIDE.

had their own share of criminality and ethnic hatreds, which Hofstadter had glossed over while running down the American heartland.

But his achievement, as Brown demonstrates, was to create a counter-narrative to that of the populists and other representatives of an older American communal life. Hofstadter had placed his hope in a reformist state committed to cultural diversity, and in pursuit of the consensus needed to legitimize his type of social and economic reforms, he thought it was necessary to go back and to unmask the forces of intolerance and exclusion wearing a

by referring to himself as the "Marx of the bourgeoisie," Hofstadter devised the stronger related image when he referred to the fiery defender of the Southern planter class, J.C. Calhoun, as the "Marx of the master class."

Brown makes clear that Hofstadter never lost his sense of being on the outside, despite his identification through both of his wives (his first, Felice, died in childbirth) and through his father, Emil, with an Eastern European Jewish ambience. The elder Hofstadter, whom Brown discusses at length, shaped his development more than his Protestant mother, who died when Richard was

only ten. While Hofstadter spent his life, once having moved from his birthplace of Buffalo and having sojourned as a professor at the University of Maryland, within the confines of the New York Jewish liberal establishment, the fit was not exactly tight. His mother and her family were German Lutherans, and Hofstadter sensed that the Jewish society he frequented, without fully entering, considered him ethnically different. He never showed much interest in either synagogue services or Zionist causes, and to the extent that he had a home as an adult, it was his apartment in Morningside Heights and the adjoining Columbia University campus. Although he voted consistently as a Democrat and railed at the "jingoism, economic ultra-conservatism, and racial animosity" that he linked to Barry Goldwater's bid for the presidency, he rarely if ever talked up the American Left. As Brown indi-

a group resemblance nonetheless, and I doubt this likeness eluded the attention of David Brown, a Midwestern Presbyterian whose strong populist sympathies are evident in his writing. Hofstadter disliked WASP America, which he felt might have excluded him during its heyday because of his paternal lineage. Unlike the Jewish liberal world, whose Marx he became, the ethnic and cultural world he criticized was then—whatever its regional or national form—a vanishing force. Hofstadter poured out his psychological epithets on a weakened collective identity, in contrast to the lively self-awareness of the New York Jewish society that he partially embraced.

For all of that, it seems to me justified to react positively, like Brown, to what Hofstadter did well. He not only continues to serve as a model for how historians should write expository prose, he also set forth noteworthy opinions that in

seems to be inadequate,' he found status anxiety in everything that could not be accounted for by an economic interpretation."

Lasch's dissection of Hofstadter's psychologizing diction, intended to dress up his dislike for people who were different from him, is among the best criticism of the Columbia University star that I have encountered. Although Brown clearly looks up to Hofstadter, some of the same criticisms that turn up in Lasch are also apparent in his well-crafted biography. Brown, however, also points to a factor that may throw new light on Hofstadter's intemperate attacks against those conservatives to whom he ascribed a "profound if largely unconscious hatred of our society and its ways."

His hasty and jaundiced linking of Goldwaterites to Senator McCarthy reflected his continued anxieties since the early '50s about the exposure of a youthful indiscretion. In 1938, Hofstadter had joined the Communist Party, which he drifted away from in 1939, after the conclusion of the Soviet-Nazi Pact. In the early '50s he brooded over the possibility that the heightened anti-communism of the period, partly instigated by the junior senator from Wisconsin, might affect him personally. His attacks on the anti-communist Right were at least partly an attempt to discredit those politicians and partisans who would be most inclined to expose him and his friends who had been Communists. Despite his lingering fear, his outbursts against the Republican Right would not likely have shielded him against the social stigma that he tried to avoid. By 1964, however, there was no reason for Hofstadter to fear that his onetime sojourn on the far Left might hurt his professional stature. It would seem, from my experience as a graduate student, that such an outcome would have had exactly the opposite result. By then, anti-anti-communism had become a major media and educational pastime. ■

Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College and the author of The Strange Death of Marxism.

HIS HASTY LINKING OF GOLDWATERITES TO SENATOR MCCARTHY REFLECTED HIS ANXIETIES ABOUT THE EXPOSURE OF A YOUTHFUL INDISCRETION.

cates, some of his bitterest words were in fact vented on self-described liberals. Hofstadter justified this negativity by pointing out, "I can never identify wholly with any collectivity. This kind of marginality is by now a more general American experience. I am not an unrepresentative American." In a comment about an exchange between two historian-acquaintances of Hofstadter, one of whom was congratulating the other on the good fortune of having found a position in "our authentic America," the Middle West, Brown makes the observation: "Hofstadter never shared this opinion or the nostalgia that lay behind it."

Hofstadter's personal life belied any image of him as an iconoclast. From his Ivy League suits and inevitable bow ties, paradigmatically conventional family life, and not always (by our exacting standards) PC references to minorities, it is hard to imagine Hofstadter in the same world as Eric Foner or in that of some of his other disciples. But there is

a less intimidating or less prescribed academic world would elicit strong debate. One of his less programmed students, who may be a delightful exception, and a self-styled populist from Nebraska, Christopher Lasch, spent years challenging Hofstadter's view of the populists and their small-town America. Lasch showed irritation at the snotty, hypocritical tone that he discerned in Hofstadter's *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. Here Hofstadter reprised his earlier work, *Anti-Intellectualism in America*, just in time to flail away at the soon-to-be-defeated Goldwaterites as hatemongers. Lasch rightly accused his teacher in *The True and Only Heaven* of having picked up the contempt for real people that characterized Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School socialists. Like Adorno, "Hofstadter saw every departure from orthodox liberalism as an expression of a 'paranoid' style. Having come to recognize a 'wide range of behavior for which the economic interpretation of politics

Compensating With a Yacht



As everyone who has ever been on the French Riviera knows, the bigger and more polluting the yacht, the shorter, more vulgar, and greedier the

owner. Last month, I went to the Cannes film festival on my boat, and before anyone cries foul, my yacht may be large, but it's a sailing boat with a tiny engine, hence I pollute as little as a jet ski, if that.

It is one of the anomalies of yachting that as new mega-yachts—I refer to them as refrigerators on steroids—become stereotypical, everyone seems to admire the look of boats from the Edwardian era. Mine is a replica of a 1920s beauty, with an all-black steel hull, wooden masts, and mahogany decks and superstructure. To my delight, some of the owners of ugly, humongous stinkpots wave as I sail by and make thumbs-up signs.

What I'd like to know is if they know a beautiful thing when they see it, why do they choose to build big and ugly? Ah, but that's human nature, you'll say. Big is beautiful: just look at General Motors. Well, that's the last thing I wish to look at, as no one who is associated with the Hummer—9 mpg—should be mentioned in the same breath with classic sailing boats. (If one has to mention the Hummer, it should be in the same breath with the neocons.) Don't get me wrong. As a libertarian-conservative, I believe I have no right to dictate to anyone what his yacht should look like as long as his boat does not pollute the water I swim in and the air I breathe.

Having said that, let's take the case of Mr. Larry Ellison, whose boat, *Rising Sun*, blocked half the bay in front of the Carlton Hotel and destroyed any illusion one might have about boats being in harmony with the sea. The Oracle boss

likes to win, as they say, but if *Rising Sun* is a victory, so is our presence in Iraq. At 453 feet long, it just beats out in length *Octopus*, which is 414 feet long and is owned by Paul Allen of Microsoft fame. *Rising Sun* is extremely ugly and has no redeeming value except showing off—my thing is bigger than yours.

My boat is 125 feet long, and its engine has 350 horsepower. Larry baby's engine has an outrageous 48,000 horsepower. 48,000 horses pollute more in a day's cruising than 350 horses pollute in a boat's lifetime. Instead of buying a boat, Ellison should get a facelift or a penis enlargement to help him feel less insecure.

Mega-yachts are big, gold-plated toys that look like office buildings, with interiors inspired by nightclubs. They are built simply to show how much money one

THE ORACLE BOSS LIKES TO WIN, AS THEY SAY, BUT IF *RISING SUN* IS A VICTORY, SO IS OUR PRESENCE IN IRAQ.

has—to hell with aesthetics and the environment. Once upon a time, when most boats were owned by reasonable people whose last thought was to show off, the bays of the Riviera were pristine and azure. Now they are dark and brownish, crisscrossed by 60-mph powerboats, jet skis, and, of course, mega-yachts. Russian kleptocrats and Arab camel thieves lead the pack of polluters, but then come our very own *nouveaux riches*, starting with Ellison and Allen. (Sorry about mentioning such people in a family magazine, but facts are facts.)

Alas, even nice people do it. A friend of mine, who owns a reasonable boat, took me out on his tender for a spin. We were doing 65 mph and bouncing, and when I commented on the excessive speed, he told me with a straight face, "This is nothing. I've ordered one which does 110 mph for next year."

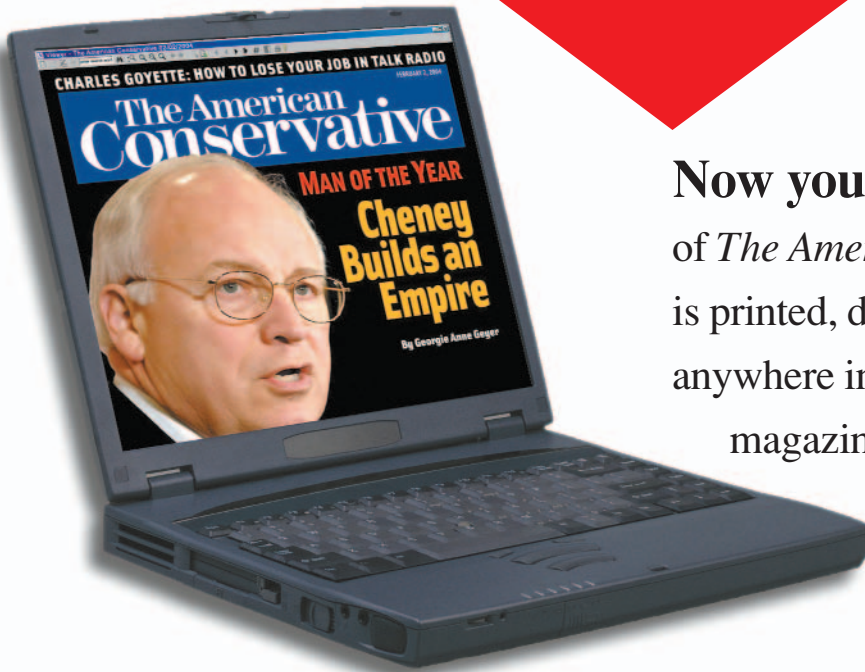
I should be surprised, but I'm not. Americans are encouraged daily to buy gas-guzzlers, and while the mayor of New York has prohibited smoking in public places—soon to be banned in our homes, too—he hasn't even noticed that no limo in his great city turns off its engine while drivers wait for their masters to finish doing whatever they do. (Drivers keep their engines idling because of the radio, heat, or air-conditioning, poor dears.) In Switzerland, the last civilized country in Europe, some traffic lights signal mandatory turning-off of engines.

Meanwhile, GM, Ford, and Daimler-Chrysler buy votes in Congress to keep the stooges from imposing improved

mileage standards. No president or politician dares to go after them the way they went after Saddam.

So why am I being so hard on *Rising Sun*, *Octopus*, *Limitless*, and the rest of the gin palaces of ugly rich men with beautiful bank accounts? In the next issue, I will list Taki's ten commandments of how to save our planet. Don't yawn. There will be nothing too green, scary, or hysterical. Just ten ways every one of us can make a difference for our grandchildren and their children in the future. ■

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